

# STORIES RETOLD

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D. F. KARAKA

•  
This India

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*Having written for the BOMBAY CHRONICLE for six years now, it is natural that parts of a book of this kind should have appeared in my writings for that paper. My thanks are due to the Editor of the BOMBAY CHRONICLE for permission to reproduce them. Scattered all over the book it is difficult to acknowledge them individually.*

*My thanks are also due to G. N. Acharya and K. D. Sethna whose double check and many suggestions have been most helpful.*

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**D. F. K.**

# CONTENTS

|                                      | PAGE |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| <b>I. I RETURN EAST</b>              |      |
| THE SHADOW OF WORLD ISSUES . . . . . | 3    |
| INDIA ON THE MARCH . . . . .         | 5    |
| DIGNITY IN EXCELSIS . . . . .        | 7    |
| I WAS A "FAILURE" . . . . .          | 9    |
| DEBATE WITH SIMON . . . . .          | 11   |
| DEBATE WITH MODY . . . . .           | 13   |
| A CROCKERY WARRIOR . . . . .         | 15   |
| A GREAT LADY . . . . .               | 17   |
| CONGRESS IN OFFICE . . . . .         | 19   |
| <b>II. JOURNALISM</b>                |      |
| COLOUR BAR . . . . .                 | 21   |
| A MORGUE OF THE LIVING . . . . .     | 23   |
| PIOUS HUMBUG . . . . .               | 25   |
| A PATHETIC SIGHT . . . . .           | 27   |
| NO HUMAN INTEREST WANTED . . . . .   | 29   |
| POLITE POLITICS . . . . .            | 31   |
| FOILED BY FATE . . . . .             | 33   |
| NEWS MUST BE CREATED . . . . .       | 35   |
| THE AGA KHAN . . . . .               | 37   |
| NIGHT LIFE . . . . .                 | 39   |
| EXPERTS DIFFER . . . . .             | 41   |
| THE ETHICS OF JOURNALISM . . . . .   | 43   |
| <b>III. SAMPLE OF ADMINISTRATION</b> |      |
| SHOCKING NEWS . . . . .              | 45   |
| THE DENIAL POLICY . . . . .          | 47   |
| " IT MIGHT BE MORE " . . . . .       | 49   |
| THE GROAN OF THE HUNGRY . . . . .    | 51   |
| SOME GRUESOME FEATURES . . . . .     | 53   |
| <b>IV. POLITICS</b>                  |      |
| A ROBOT IN GANDHISM . . . . .        | 55   |
| NO MORE A POET'S DREAM . . . . .     | 57   |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| THE GLAMOUR OF POWER . . . . .         | 59 |
| THE TRUTH MUST BE TOLD . . . . .       | 61 |
| AZAD'S GREAT IDEALS . . . . .          | 63 |
| JINNAH'S LIMITATIONS . . . . .         | 65 |
| JINNAH'S MEDIOCRE SATELLITES . . . . . | 67 |
| WHY THE TALKS FAILED . . . . .         | 69 |
| DISILLUSIONMENT . . . . .              | 71 |
| BANKRUPTCY OF WISDOM . . . . .         | 73 |
| NO BACKGROUND OF READINESS . . . . .   | 75 |
| VEGETARIANISM IN POLITICS . . . . .    | 77 |

## V. SOME PEOPLE

|   |    |
|---|----|
| MY HEART IS STILL WITH YOU . . . . .      | 79 |
| THE SOUL OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE . . . . .   | 81 |
| A LIVE FORCE IN INDIA . . . . .           | 83 |
| NOT A PILOT—JUST A CHAIRMAN . . . . .     | 85 |
| THE NIGHTINGALE . . . . .                 | 87 |
| NO PERORATION—NO PURPLE PATCHES . . . . . | 89 |
| NOT LOVED SO MUCH AS FEARED . . . . .     | 91 |
| MORE INDIAN THAN MANY INDIANS . . . . .   | 93 |
| NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA . . . . .     | 95 |

## VI. LOVE, SEX AND MORALS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| MARRIAGE BY ADVERTISEMENT . . . . .      | 97  |
| A PASTIME OF PARENTS . . . . .           | 99  |
| EMPHASIS ON RESPECTABILITY . . . . .     | 101 |
| A BOGUS RADIO STAR . . . . .             | 103 |
| THE GUIDE HOLDS THE BABY . . . . .       | 105 |
| LOVELESS BREEDING OF CHILDREN . . . . .  | 107 |
| ORTHODOX OBTUSENESS . . . . .            | 109 |
| THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE! . . . . .         | 111 |
| THE YOKE OF AN UNREAL MORALITY . . . . . | 113 |

## VII. ODDS AND ENDS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| A VICEREGAL GARDEN PARTY . . . . .        | 115 |
| NO DOMINION STATUS—ONLY LOVE . . . . .    | 117 |
| THE ENGLISHMAN-IN-INDIA . . . . .         | 119 |
| MODY HAD LOST HIS SEX APPEAL . . . . .    | 121 |
| HOMI MEHTA ON GANDHI . . . . .            | 123 |
| SOME NAMES IN WHO'S WHO . . . . .         | 125 |
| BABU LAL BALI'S LETTER . . . . .          | 127 |
| HARI SINGH GOUR . . . . .                 | 129 |
| GREASE SPOTS VERSUS BLOOD SPOTS . . . . . | 131 |
| THE SAD PLIGHT OF HARIJANS . . . . .      | 133 |
| THE WOMEN OF PADMINI'S LAND . . . . .     | 135 |
| WHITE POPPIES WORK WONDERS . . . . .      | 137 |
| SCHACHT'S VISIT TO INDIA . . . . .        | 139 |
| NAZISM—THE LAST THING IN HELL . . . . .   | 141 |



## I RETURN EAST

I NEVER SAW THE WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER AS, AFTER MY eight years in England, I caught a P & O boat to return East. It was rather the bleak outlook of Tilbury Docks on a cold February morning that receded as my ship left port. The year was 1938, and I was homeward bound after Oxford, London, Paris and all that those eight years had meant. Three friends of mine wished me good-bye. As a parting gift they brought back for me my cigarette case which had been nestling in pawn. In my wallet was an unused three ha'penny stamp, the only form of wealth I possessed.

I wasn't quite sure where I stood nor what I would do with myself on my return East. I had told my father that I would fend for myself in London till I got through my Bar Finals. He felt that I should return but I preferred to stay. The result was that I had to find a job to be able to pay for my board and lodging. So came my first job: I sold pants in a West End Shop—a complete anti-climax from the Presidency of the Oxford Union which to date was the only feather in my cap. In between selling pants I wrote a book for Michael Joseph, which was called *I Go West*. The book was scheduled to come out just after my boat sailed. As was the custom, review copies had already gone out and my publishers told me they had heard it would have a very good London press. I knew the sort of splash it would get. Keith Briant, a great friend of mine, had got it for his book *Oxford Ltd.* It had shaken the prudés. *I Go West* was expected to do the same. But of all the days in the year, Mr. Anthony Eden, then the British Foreign Secretary, was unsociable enough to pick the very day of publication for his resignation from the British Cabinet.

The resignation of the Foreign Secretary was no small matter. The people of England stood up and took notice. No one was in a mood to bother about the effusions of a young Indian when more important issues were at stake. The word "war" began to be mentioned in the press and every thinking man was trying to figure out for himself what was the future that lay ahead. Eden's resignation was a rude awakening for a people, who, broadly speaking, had so long been apathetic to the danger of another world war.

The writing had already appeared on the wall, first with Manchuria, then Abyssinia, then Spain, but no one seemed to have the time or the inclination to read it. When men like Litvinov uttered grave warnings in the League Assembly, the representatives of the Great Powers stretched themselves lazily on the benches, a trifle bored with the Russian's utterances. The League dismissed Manchuria as a frontier incident and Sir John Simon regretted he could do nothing about it, for China was after all "a mere geographical expression." Then came Spain and Ethiopia and the seeds of Fascist aggrandisement were allowed to be sown in the gardens that bounded the Lake of Geneva.

In a speech on Ethiopia made to the great Assembly, Halifax explained the British behaviour. As the noble Lord so elegantly phrased it, "it may seem to impinge on principle." But, he went on, the sacrifice of Ethiopia was "a sacrifice to an ideal". So ran that classical speech of a one-time Christian Viceroy who, after mastering the Rope Trick in India, adapted it to Foreign Affairs and performed the astonishing feat of speaking of "the eternal and immutable moralities" while conniving at the rape of Abyssinia. This was the speech which the London *Times* found "admirable", although a few plain-speaking people cried out in the wilderness, unable to stomach the attitude of their Government.

Among these, I remember, was F. L. Lucas, the Cambridge don, who wrote a pungent Open Letter to Lord

Halifax. As Lucas said, "even Ethiopia and Spain could scarcely forbear to cheer" the speech of the noble Lord. "No doubt", Lucas said, "it will be long before this sort of Genevan festivity recurs. It is not every week that even a British Government can, on two successive days, condemn to extinction an Empire it stood pledged to protect from attack and a Republic it stood equally pledged to protect from foreign intervention. But on the next happy occasion, pray spare us, at least, 'the eternal and immutable moralities'. Even from an ex-Fellow of All Souls and biographer of the sainted Keble, such unction grows a little nauseous."

All these were world issues. They loomed large and their shadow fell on the lives of an increasing number of plain people, who found it difficult to adjust themselves to the foreign policies of their Government. There was a conflict in their minds between righteousness on the one hand, which involved strife, and apathy on the other which guaranteed a breathing space from war. It was on a big issue like this that Eden had resigned. But for me it was the more personal problems of my life that were really worrying and the fact that, as a result of Eden's resignation, the whole book trade experienced, in the fortnight that followed, the biggest slump it had ever known. Everything seemed at a stand-still. When the flop was over, *I Go West* had lost its chance. Mr. Anthony Eden will never know what a difference his resignation made to me.

It was a sad, heavy feeling, returning home. I had spent eight of the most impressionable years of my life in England. I had enjoyed a freedom of living, of thinking and of feeling, which I was not sure I would be able to retain. My sense of values had changed and with them my ideals too. Oxford meant much to me. It had taught me above all to think for myself and to have the courage to rely upon my opinion. Yet in another way I was glad to get back to India, which I regarded as my eventual home. I came with hope, for India reflected my own mood—that of incessant struggle. Struggle had always fascinated me.

Like all young men I wanted the things that were most difficult to get, and when I got something I yearned for something more. Youth knows no bounds to ambition, and looking back now there are no regrets even though many a coveted goal I never reached.

Nothing eventful happened on that trip except that at Port Said I saw a big Italian troopship carrying the returning "Crusaders" of Mussolini's Fascist Empire. The Suez Canal was always open to them. The Italian Government had been given a free hand in Abyssinia, and the voice of the little man of the world, who protested in the name of decency, was drowned amidst the applause of a blind League of Nations. The warnings of men like Churchill and Douglas Reed fell on deaf ears. Those who spoke of pacifism were regarded as cranks, for wasn't there peace already? Those who uttered the warning that sooner or later the whole world would be at war, were brushed aside as war-mongers. I couldn't really make up my mind which was the right way of thinking. But as usual I preferred to be with the minority which is always called "the wrong side".

At Port Said an incident occurred which was typical of the things that were happening to me. It was a final *coup de grâce*. I got a wire of congratulations from the family who had heard from my tutor that I had passed the Bar Finals, to be followed by another telegram two days later saying this was all a mistake and that I had failed in one paper and would have to sit for it again. What made it so annoying was the fact that I need not have sat for this paper in the first place, being exempt from it on the strength of my Oxford degree. This put the finishing touch to the frustration I felt. Fate was fighting me every inch. When I did emerge as a Barrister-at-law after long correspondence with the Bar authorities, who granted the exemption, becoming a Barrister had lost much of its glamour.

To celebrate all these events I gave a party on board ship to a few fellow-passengers with a sense of humour.

The women wore black and in turn I served black olives, black caviar and black velvet. The ship's tote made this party possible. It was my last extravagance before stepping ashore, and when I got off at Ballard Pier, I was able to say, in more senses than one, that I was starting life with a clean slate!

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Things had moved fast in India during the eight years I had been away. At no other period in its slothful history had the country gathered so much momentum and the people felt such an urge to bridge the gulf between themselves and the free peoples of the world. The issue was very clear. It was a fight for the right to govern ourselves. The method used to attain that goal was novel, for nowhere else in the world had a people attempted what was virtually a revolution by non-violent means. Here and there, was evidence of a desire to break loose, but the Mahatma's hold over India kept that seething impulse in check.

His method had succeeded. He had proved more than once that Satyagraha was a force that could not be pushed aside and the strong-hand-in-the-velvet-glove appeared paralysed each time it attempted to strangle the aspirations of the people. For the mind and heart remained unsubdued even when the body was unfree.

So that in a sense it was quite exciting to return to my country and my people. India seemed gloriously on the march, holding forth the promise of freedom to its 400,000,000 people. Freedom seemed to me like a first love, and when I thought of India in terms of its fight for freedom, I felt the thrill of a man who after long absence from home returns to find the girl of his childhood grown up into the woman of his dreams. That was the first impression.

But the course of true love, the sages say, never did run smooth. And I realized quite soon that while we strove for—and rightly strove for—our freedom, we were

not even aware of the domination of our own people by obsolete customs and outworn traditions, by ancestral prejudices which were quite contrary to the spirit of freedom to which we aspired. While seeking political freedom, we did not seek that other greater freedom which must precede it or which must be ready to follow—the freedom from the smallness of our own minds which dogged us at every stage of our progress. We ignored the shackles imposed on us by centuries of decadence which had resulted from a fallowness of thought and unprogressive living. While we planned our political economy, we did not feel the call to build the character without which a nation's life is nought. We did not even march in step like an advancing army, but haphazardly in multitudinous groups, split into sects, castes and creeds, each eager to safeguard only its rights and privileges and grab as much as possible of power for itself which would result from a free India. I realized abruptly that however much I may have liked to be an Indian, the prejudices amidst which I lived had a strangling hold on me—especially the prejudices that came from the smallness of my own community.

How uncomfortable were those early days, only one who has experienced them can know. I was the target for attack by all sorts and manner of people, who, though they had contributed nothing to the cost of my education, felt they had a right to comment on it. Sub-committees sat in judgment over me, consisting of remote relations, all of whom, bound to me by far-fetched ties of blood, had their two-cents' worth of say on what I should have done and what I should do now. The only people who refrained from commenting were my parents, who, though disappointed that I had neither passed into the Civil Service nor taken the Bar seriously, preferred to let me decide things for myself.

My first impact with this coterie of advice-giving people constitutes the first phase of my struggle on my return East. I could write a book on it—a sort of *Mein Kampf* with knobs on.

Who were these people? Generically speaking, they were the backbone of my community, the Parsis, the people who were always dodging the issue of being Indians, still clinging to the idea that Persian blood streaked through their veins. They had the sort of complex the Anglo-Indian reveals when his daughter gets married and the announcement in the Social and Personal column makes a pointed reference to the family having originated from Yorkshire, even though for two generations it had never gone much beyond Poona. Economically speaking, they were the people with deposit accounts in the banks of India and could now afford to wag their tongues. Physically they were overfed, leisurely unemployed, middle-aged men and their wives—fattened women whose rich silk blouses smelt of stale perspiration because the silk was too expensive to wash. Intellectually they were zeros.

One day at Thacker's printing press I saw on a card a prayer which I thought they would do well to offer. It read. "O Lord, help me to keep my bloody nose out of other people's business."

You must have seen these prudes if at some time or other you have chanced to pass through the City of Bombay. They are one of the sights of the City, like the Towers of Silence, the Burning Ghauts, the Hanging Gardens: Papa with gold watch and chain, sitting in the family limousine with Mamma next to him, wearing rubies and emeralds in the space left blank by her low-cut blouse, driving down Cuffe Parade in the days when petrol was not rationed, purring over the stretch at two miles an hour. *Dignity in excelsis!*

In the evening of their lives, their thoughts were of their children. "Well, Sorabji, have you decided about our son?" Mamma said to Papa.

"There is time yet," Papa said, taking a more calm and philosophical attitude to life.

"Well, I'm telling you straight, I'm not sending him to England. Put him in a good job." Then a pause and an

idea hit Mamma and she said: "Why don't you go and speak to Mr. Táta? Now, that's a good Parsi firm."

"Well, we'll see," said Papa.

"What, we'll see, we'll see?" Mamma was serious now.

Just then I'd pass and they'd bow to me, as I'd lift my dark-blue Scott hat—still retaining its Piccadilly touch, with that curve of the brim and that immaculate crown. Twenty-five shillings!

But when I'd passed them I knew Mamma had turned to Papa and said: "I wouldn't like our son to become like him and waste his father's money instead of passing the I. C. S. exam."

Yes, these were Parsis sure enough. I ought to know them for I was born one myself. The standard work on the Parsis emanates from my family, strange to say, written by a distinguished ancestor of mine, whose name I bear. Published by Macmillan in the days when it was rare for an Indian to write books in English and rarer still to have them published in England, this book had made enough royalty for my great-grandfather to enable him to send his son, my grandfather, to England for the Bar. Various well-to-do friends of the family, which at that time included several baronets, knights and Maharajahs are said to have bought fifty and a hundred copies each of this expensive work in two volumes—an indication, as I once told my father to his annoyance, that the book was never read, for, as I argued, when a man wants to read a book he buys one copy, not fifty, which is more like patronizing charity.

I admit this book made bright and courageous reading. It showed how from a beaten and decadent nation, which could not successfully resist the Arab invasion, a few thousand, who were staunch defenders of the prophet Zarathustra's message, escaped from Persia rather than acquiesce in the religious dictates of their invaders; how they settled down in India by the courtesy of the

Hindus who were more tolerant of another people's religion; how in India they maintained their religious independence and how in commerce and industry the descendants of those refugees from Persia played a pioneering part. All that naturally made good reading and for the generation for which my great-grandfather wrote it was probably stimulating. No one has disputed that we Parsis have had a glorious past and that among our ancestors have been Rustom and Sohrab and the rest. So what? The Greeks, the Romans, the Chinese can boast of a far greater past. Yet Greece today is an unimportant part of Europe. Rome has been a playground for the Fifth Army, inspite of its Empires, old and new. And the Chinese have even been laundry-men.

What was important was the present and the immediate future, and in this respect we were nothing more than a fragmentary community of India, yet trying to live in splendid isolation, as if what happened to India did not really concern us, as if we were beyond India, beyond its tribulations. We were Persians by blood, remember!

..... Back at home that evening I'd hear what So-and-So said about me at the Club or at a lunch or dinner party. Sir So-and-So had suggested, my father would sometimes painfully tell me: "Now that he has failed in the I. C. S. ...." The word "failure" was used more often in my case than I have ever heard it used of others.

"Of course I'd speak to Sir So-and-So about him," another old friend of the family would tell my father, "for your sake, of course, I'd do it. But what can the boy do?"

That was the sort of reception I got from the community on my return—a frightening prospect for a young and somewhat sensitive man. Insignificant as was the community, for they were only a hundred thousand in a country of nearly 400 million, its effect was damaging, for it made one realize the opposition which had been built up through the years waiting to avenge itself on anyone who tried to leave the beaten track. A bigoted orthodox element within it, as in other communities in India, stood

like a rock refusing to budge, accepting nothing that departed from the dogmas and shibboleths on which orthodoxy had sustained itself, accepting no change which might have come in the wake of time. The March of Time was just something that passed before their eyes without touching even the fringe of their mind and thought.

Often I am asked whether or not I am proud of being a Parsi—a stupid question in the India of 1944. Nowadays when even nationality and race arrogance are very dangerous things to be proud of, as the war has proved, and India can with difficulty hold itself together, torn as it is into sects and communities by orthodox and mutually exclusive elements, communal feeling is an extravagance no young Indian can afford. One naturally feels a fond affection for one's community. But fond affection is about all one should have. Beyond it, one's belonging to a community is a detail necessary only to such things as passport regulations and the filling of census forms.

If we are to owe allegiance, it must be owed to other things in life: to the poor and oppressed of the world; to the coloured men who have suffered and been humiliated; to those who are able-bodied and willing to work, but cannot find the opportunity; to the genuinely unfortunate; to those who are struggling for the liberation of humanity whether in our own country or elsewhere. For all these beliefs of mine, I have paid. And of disillusionment which came in its wake, I have had more than my share.

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Often in those days I would sit in the evenings, my legs stretched on the railings of our verandah, looking down on the stream of cars that went by. In my mind I would try and recapture some of those moments, personal to me, which had made life worth living. Again and again I would remember that Thursday night at the Union, Michael Foot in the Chair and John Simon, then Foreign

Secretary in His Majesty's Government as the distinguished visitor at the debate which then appeared to be the most important moment in my life—the debate for the Presidency of the next term. How nervously I had fidgeted at the dinner before the debate, looking over my notes and recapitulating the peroration which I had worked on and polished for as many as eight weeks. Then the walking ceremoniously into the packed hall amidst the deafening applause which greeted Simon, who was not only a Foreign Secretary but also one of the two most distinguished ex-Presidents from Wadham, the other being F. E. Smith, the first Lord Birkenhead. In spite of Simon's wavering political allegiance, for Simon was a Liberal in a National Government, he was a first-class speaker, a polished advocate who had made his mark at the English Bar. The Foreign Office was only a half-way house to the Woolsack, which was his eventual destination.

Then the President's bell. "Order! Order!", the President's voice had bellowed through the hushed silence and then one's own voice which could be heard, saying: "Mr. President, Sir..."

Debating with Simon at that time and in a house which never missed a quip or an epigram, was a thrill not easily forgotten. Aubrey Herbert, a more recent ex-President also spoke that night—on my side, Simon being on the other. The motion was of no-confidence in the National Government.

That day Herbert spoke of Simon as a dead leader and he went on to deliver in Simon's presence a complete, funeral oration. "And slowly and sadly by that catafalque we will walk", Herbert said, "mourning the loss of a man, who might have been a great leader, had he any principles to which he had adhered." It is difficult to recollect at this distance of time the exact phraseology of Aubrey Herbert, but his vein was much the same. He spoke of Simon lying "in a coffin made of the best Empire timber, on which in Birmingham gold was inscribed:

Here lies Sir John,  
He had ideals,  
He is dead  
And now they are gone.

I forgot the last lines but the ending was that Simon now made a worms' meal.

Imagine Simon there on the bench on the other side—the Right Honourable Sir John Simon, Foreign Secretary in His Majesty's Government, a King's Counsel, a Member of the Privy Council, Simon, the leading brains of the Chancery Bar being called to his face "A worms' meal", because of his shabby politics. It was enough to make the Right Honourable Gentleman turn purple in the face. But it was one of the accepted rules of debate—rules which are unknown in our country—that no man taking part in an Oxford Union debate could object to or regard himself immune from the sharpest criticism that could be levelled against him. Simon sat still and took what was dished out to him.

What a moment that was!—Simon badgered and butchered and still taking it like a man, waiting for his turn to come, while the bronze Birkenhead smiled from that corner in the hall—Birkenhead who was dead, yet to our generation at Oxford always so much alive. And from either side of the hall two venerable, old gentlemen in marble watched this drama of an older man being pitched into by the fire of youth. They too had once been in that hall. Their names were Gladstone and Salisbury.

As one spoke in the 1930's at the Oxford Union one felt like a modern in a classic assembly—an assembly that had grown up like a tradition, generation after generation, embodying the best that was in the English character, freedom of speech and expression. Even now, when I think of those days, I feel the chandeliers rocking with applause and the gallery, full of fair visitors—for no women were allowed on the floor—crammed to overflow—

ing and the house itself so full on the big nights that Honourable Members had to sit on the floor.

Let me take you to another debate—a debate in India, in which I regrettably figured, believing in my enthusiasm that I could recreate some of that atmosphere here in Green's Hotel.

It was a debate of the Progressive Group, whose President at the time was a Muslim, an Insurance man. The subject was journalism. A very charming businessman-cum-politician, Sir H. P. Mody, attacked journalism; he was supported by an Englishman whose name I don't remember. Francis Low (now Sir Francis) editor of the *Times of India* defended it. I supported Low. That was the general idea, but the debate as it developed turned out to be a rag debate on the Parsi Knight. Low pitched into him and I devoted my entire speech to Sir Homi, referring to journalism only in passing. When I wasn't being rude to Mody, I was rude to Low. I went for Mody's politics, which had been of the sitting-on-the-fence type. I used that beautiful epigram of Lloyd George, when he attacked Simon in the House of Commons and said: "Sir John Simon has sat so long astride the fence that by now the iron must have entered his soul." I applied that to H. P. I called him all sorts and manner of names, all in good fun. I called him the man-on-the-flying-trapeze, balancing himself on the greasy pole of Liberalism, one foot on the Congress plank, the other in Government House.

Do you think the house laughed or applauded? No. There was a stone-cold silence, while our local intelligentsia sitting round at little tables at Green's Hotel, consumed large quantities of lemon squash, chased down by gargantuan chicken and ham sandwiches. I realize now how stupid I was to believe I could reproduce the atmosphere of the Oxford Union in such a place.

What about the audience? A gramophone record made by Lakshmanan of the A. I. R. intended for re-broadcasting, showed that people took as much as ten seconds to

laugh at a joke and some took even more, and some didn't laugh at all. Parsi women, taking the remarks against H. P. as directed against a sort of Personal Representative of theirs, spent the better part of their time telling each other that it was "in bad taste". One woman walked out and was heard to exclaim: "Disgusting!" And the aftermath of all this was that the President thought I ought to apologize! I never did. But what a disillusionment it was.

I had believed in my enthusiasm that a young body like the Progressive Group would be the haven of young intellect. Here our growing men and women could learn how to speak and conduct themselves in public. Here would come the orators of tomorrow. Here they would learn how to conduct public meetings and debates and pave the way for the day when we would have a real Parliament of our own. But I learnt fairly soon that even a third-rate grammar school debating society showed more promise.

It was an uncomfortable feeling to find out so early on my return that everyone easily got offended in India. The reason of this was not an ultra sensitiveness, but rather that men in our public life had neither the experience nor the education which that life demanded. If they could not take it, it was only because of an inability to dish it out. When I compare my quite harmless remarks about Sir H. P. Modi, to the New York Journal *America's* comments on Colonel Wedgewood, M. P., I begin to realize the difference between freedom of speech in other countries and that which we are supposed to have here. In its issue of July 18, 1941, under the column headed "In The News", *America* said:

"We have been honoured by a visit from a typical member of the British ruling classes.

"He is Colonel Josiah C. Wedgewood of the Wedgewood porcelain family.

"He is likewise a member of the British Parliament.

"He tells us all about our American business—'where we get off', 'when we get off' and 'how we get off'.

"We are punks.

"We are slow.

"Colonel Wedgewood wants to give us the 'bum's rush' and throw us out of our peace, out of our independence, out of our baby welfare, out of our free institutions, into the gutter of war.

"He allows of no arguments.

"He says: 'This is your war, and you are in it up to your necks'.

"He continues: 'The trouble with you Americans is that you are afraid to assume responsibility'.

"Friends and fellow Americans, we sort of thought that we had assumed quite a lot of responsibilities during the last war that England was in.

"And that we had assumed obligations too—obligations that were in no way ours and duties that were theirs but were repudiated, and damages and depressions, too, that we have never been able to recover from.

"And we thought we had conferred quite a few boons and benefits, especially upon England, pulling John Bull out of the bloody mess he had gotten himself into, and putting his topper back on his head, and dusting off his clothes and wiping his bruised nose, and standing him back on his steady feet.

"For all of which we were called Uncle Sap—and rightly so called . . .

"Still there is no use becoming unduly incensed at this crockery warrior.

"His opinions are characteristic of his present Government."

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There were other moments I thought of while leaning on that verandah in those long evenings which dragged heavily: the day the hunger marchers passed through Oxford on their way to Westminster from the Black North; Armistice Day 1933 on which we marched through the streets carrying a banner which read: "We will fight war"; the day I got a letter inviting me to reply to Signor Mussolini when he opened his mausoleum to the Middle East—an invitation I was unable to accept; the personal post-card from the Arandora Star from George Bernard Shaw; the day I passed Bumpus's in Oxford Street and felt thrilled to see a pile of my books in his front-most window; the day Sarojini Naidu came to the Majlis and made the most beautiful speech I have ever heard.

Other moments too, in a softer key, came back from the past: the river at Oxford under a summer sky; *The George* on a Saturday night; the O.U.D.S. play; 'Eights' Week with the boats racing down the Isis and beautiful women walking gracefully on its banks in their long, cotton frocks and large straw hats; 'Commem' week dances and the college lit like a medieval castle at the time of fiesta; the crowds coming out of theatres in Shaftesbury Avenue; the concerts; the music; that exquisite grace of living which belonged to the average man before this war; the simple beauty of it all.

More than any other thing, I learnt at Oxford how to appreciate the finer things in life and how never to let a great moment pass without understanding its meaning and its importance. It was education in the fullest sense of that word. The acquisition of knowledge was secondary to the acquisition of that finer sense of feeling which distinguishes the man of culture from the educated rank and file. It taught me how all emotion while being deeply felt

must be expressed with restraint; how the subtle was so much more delightful than the obvious and how, more than anything else, there was a simple and natural honesty fundamental to all clean, decent people—and that this alone was the basis of all living.

Of knowledge there was an abundance in Oxford. It seemed to emanate from those Gothic structures, whose spires pointed to the heavens, and from whose cloistered towers came the musty smell of books wherein was to be found the gathered wisdom of the ages. The outside world seemed dead as one entered the Bodleian and took a book from its shelves and sat in a corner to read. In its hallowed silence one found the peace which passeth all understanding. Man was at ease with his soul and all the goodness in him came over him like an aura. And in the evening when the chapel bell rang from the tower of Christ Church, it seemed to toll the knell of a parting day in an old Cathedral city. Yes, Oxford was a different world, a world that will live in the hearts of the men who passed through it, generation after generation. Nowhere else can Oxford be recreated except in Oxford itself.

All this would pass through my mind as I sat through the evenings on our verandah listening to a different music: taxi horns, street cries; the yelling of urchins; Ganpat shouting to Gangubai, his wife.

On that verandah, sitting on a high chair and looking around, was a great lady in the last days of her life. She was my grandmother. She had told my father when she was very ill that she would live until I returned. And when I did, all struggle ceased in her and she passed the last days as if waiting for her call. She seemed to belong to a different world and speak a different language. She had definite views on what was right and what was wrong. In her, one found charity in its most unostentatious form. To her came people—poor people—who had been coming to her for years and no one of her children or grandchildren knew what she did for them or how their lives were shaped by her. It was only later at

her funeral when men and women, unknown to many of us of the family, wept bitterly that I understood something of the greatness that lay in silent work.

The world to which she belonged is dead, nor are there any regrets, for in many ways it would have been an anachronism now. It was a world in which it was an honour to be presented at a King's Court and to bow or courtesy to a Viceroy; a world in which we were asleep as a nation, unaware of the storm that was raging in other parts of the world; a world more of folklore, of ceremonial, pomp, pageantry; a world dead to reality yet a world of graceful living, of ideals, however limited, of individual enterprise, of a liberalism of thought, of infinite charity, kindness, of naive simplicity, of hard, solid work. This world was dead even as the great lady is.

In its place I thought I would find on my return a clean, strong, new India that would rise on the ashes of the old. The path to freedom would be lit by the light that had burnt inside us, as like glow-worms we fumbled our way through the dark. With the awakening of the people would come a new dawn and in its wake a new day for our people. That was the dream many of us dreamt, as we watched the struggles of 1930 and 1933, and as Moses had stood on the rock and beheld Pisgah, we too thought that we were in sight of the promised land.

But the India to which I returned was not like that. It was loud, uncouth, *nouveau riche*, uncultured, ugly. There was no sense of values other than of wealth and more wealth. Wealth had become the one all embracing fact around which so many people's lives revolved. I am not now referring to the people as a whole, for India was still miserably poor and the masses had barely enough to keep body and soul together. I am speaking rather of the men and women of the big cities—the middle class and the upper middle class, the new crop of industrialists, business men, bankers, merchants, who had in one way or another amassed fortunes and were now hankering for the most

## CONGRESS IN OFFICE

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material things in life. While there was a wave of national feeling all over the country, it appeared as if the struggle for our nationalism was being fought not by the have's so much as by the have-not's.

Opportunists there are bound to be in every country, specially a country like India with its unlimited scope for advancement, but that these should masquerade from amongst us as well-wishers of the country's welfare was a little unfortunate for the country and for us. But of these there were plenty and it was at first difficult to distinguish the sheep from the wolves.

The one predominant change that had come over India was obviously its political awakening. While I had been away, there had been two major movements—those of 1930 and 1933—and the power and influence of the Congress had grown beyond all recognition. Congress had taken office by the time I returned and it was an inspiring sight to see our own countrymen discharge the major functions of state, which had hitherto been discharged by Englishmen in the Services. Right upto that stage and even through the early part of the days of Congress-in-office, one felt that we were marching in step towards the eventual goal, which was that we should be a free people and ours should be a free country.

But unknown to many of us, who felt we were within a stone's throw of our eventual goal, something happened which even the most shrewd and cautious observers of Indian affairs missed. It was that our struggle had lost its fire and our destiny fell in the hands of a number of second and third line leaders who were really untrained, unqualified and unfit for wearing the mantle of leadership. It was only fair that those who had been with the party from the beginning should have the first claim to the plums of office when the party came to power. They were the men who had in the early days borne the brunt of the *lathi* charges; they had gone to prison; they had sacrificed the best days of their life to make the voice of India heard in the larger

auditorium of the world. They naturally had the first claim when Congress came to power. The unfortunate thing was that, with some few exceptions, neither by persuasion nor by training, were these men able to fill the big roles which were thrust upon them. The glamour of office, and the power and dignity which it entailed, was too much to resist and the result was a gradual disintegration of the spirit of sacrifice, which was the sole inspiration of the national movement, followed by an even more rapid weakening of the human flesh.

At no stage of these six odd years since my return, however, have I wavered in my feeling for my people and my country, nor in their eventual aspirations, their ideals. The Indian struggle has been glorious to watch and for every Indian of my generation it has been a source of lasting inspiration. But how far were we short of our own ideals and how far did we stray time and again from the purpose which we had set before us? Why was it that in our everyday life we reflected nothing of the teachings of the one man who was blindly followed as a Mahatma? In our zeal to free ourselves from foreign domination, we destroyed not only some of the chains that bound us to it, but destroyed also some of the finer things which we possessed as a people. Although we were ready to parade ourselves as crusaders in a fight for freedom in the political sphere, we were in other aspects of freedom—freedom from the horrible domination of orthodoxy, of class, of caste, of communal prejudice, of superstition—so cowardly that we were not worthy of the freedom to which we aspired.

All these things were not considered by the great majority of thinking people, nor by the younger generation on whom will fall the responsibility of conducting the affairs of this country. It is not enough that one day we should find ourselves free, if we have not trained and disciplined ourselves to shoulder the burden which freedom entails along with the luxurious feeling of being self-governed and free. The trend of national thought today is that freedom comes first and we don't care a damn what

follows: This sentiment is echoed not only by those now impatient fighters for freedom, who have borne their share of waiting, but also by an almost hysterical younger generation, chiefly students, who without having put in the fundamental spade work necessary to a nationalist movement, merely want to take the curtain call and be among those present at the finish. This is the most dangerous thing that can happen to any country viz., a whole middle generation lost in mere emotionalism and lacking in the foundation of solid work. In all the excitement of being in the front line of the struggle, these young men and women are depriving themselves of the opportunity of learning how to be citizens in the broad sense of that word. Political leaders, eager to foment unrest, encourage this. But the India of tomorrow will pay for this folly.

## II

## JOURNALISM

MY FIRST ARTICLE OF ANY CONSEQUENCE WAS A FEATURE Page 800-worder for the *Daily Herald* on "Colour Bar" ... This organ of tempered British Socialism sold round 2,000,000 copies daily and I felt a sense of self-importance to be appearing on its Feature-Page even for a day. The morning on which it was to see the light, I got up early and bought the paper. There it was with Paul Robeson's picture prominently at the head of it.

It was an April morning in London. The street lights were still burning from the night before. It was damp, and the roads glistened with the falling rain. Soon the great metropolis would awaken to another day. The hum of traffic would start with the first streaks of dawn. Millions of people would be up and about, going to their work, travelling in buses, trams, tubes. Some of them would read the *Daily Herald*, I thought. The Colour Bar was a

burning question for humanity. It touched the lives of hundreds of thousands of men all over the world. On such a subject I had written and presented my views to the people of London that morning. What would they do about it? Would there be a controversy in the London press? Would hordes of Londoners, believing in Lincoln's dictum that all men were created equal, storm Trafalgar Square, *Daily Herald* in hand, and demand that justice should immediately be meted out to the coloured man? How would John Bull take me and my views? I decided to find out for myself.

I went and had a hot coffee at the Criterion, which kept open all night. It was empty at that hour of the morning except for a handful of sleepy customers, who had just come out of a night club. In a desire to contact the broad cross-section of the English newspaper-reading public, I picked up conversation with my waiter, but he turned out to be of Italian descent and told me quite tersely that reading newspapers was a waste of time. In the buses and tubes I boarded that morning I never met the man I was looking for—the man who would read my first big article. The average man and woman in Britain before the War were not really interested in broad human subjects like the Colour Bar. It was only of special, academic interest to a few people. Who they were or where they were, it was difficult to tell. But to the broad mass, it was the football and the cricket results that were more sustaining; or else big finance, a scandal of the Stavisky dimensions, a juicy murder with the culprit still at large, the inside stories of the Upper set, the oddities of life like the Quintuplets.

When I had had enough of the cross-section of the English newspaper-reading public, I came home. But one thing I learnt that day; it is the function of a journalist to write what he feels and never bother to find out how much of it is read. This attitude is often regarded as a form of conceit. Whatever the comment, it is essential to all professional journalism.

One day I saw for the first time the inside of a big London newspaper office. It was when I called on Esterman, the Feature Editor of the *Daily Herald*. I had rung him up and asked for an appointment. When I was shown into his room, he had just finished looking through a set of newspaper cuttings which were in a file.

I introduced myself. I was beginning to tell him who I was, what I had done at the University, when he put the cuttings before me. They were cuttings about me and some of them I had not seen myself.

"How do these come here?" I asked, a little surprised.

"We keep a morgue," he said. "It's called a morgue, but it's really of the living. Everyone who appears in a London paper at some time or other is carefully scrutinized and if we think we may hear of him again, we file the clipping."

"But all the thousands of people?"

"More than thousands!"

It was nothing unusual, for this appeared to be the accepted practice of all the leading papers of the world and it is said that the American papers, like *Time Magazine*, are even more up-to-date in their reference library. So great is the mass of reference material that it has to be kept in reels to conserve space.

But how many Indian papers have a morgue? How many have even a reference library where posterity can find any information of the present or the past? The answer to these questions would be disheartening to anyone aspiring to work as a journalist on an Indian paper.

Indian newspapers believe that information of this kind must be carried in the heads of journalists, so that if the editorial staff of a paper in India were to leave that paper *en bloc*, a new set of employees would be at a total loss to know what the paper had written <sup>particularly</sup>.

subject or what its policy was in the past unless it wades through the old copies of the paper.

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This attitude in Indian journalism, to refuse to accept even the most fundamental principles on which an office is run, is inexplicable. Individual journalists tell you that they are underpaid and, therefore, owe no obligation to their proprietor to do anything more than the minimum necessary for the paper. The proprietors tell you that it is for the journalists themselves to plan for their future. The Editor cannot be bothered with such trifling matters because other more important things require his attention. What can be more important than a subject like "Release Gandhiji"!

Journalism in India has, for a long time, been popularly understood to be a form of sacrifice: low wages, no pensions, no provident funds, no security in the present, much less in the future. A nationalist newspaper in India is like a Third Class Waiting Room at a railway station into which come not only genuine passengers who want to wait till they catch the next train, but all the vagrants of the town who have no other shelter.

The journalists of yesterday are, most of them, on the streets unless they have died in harness, still dragging a heavy pen in the last days of their life. From the whole galaxy of Indian journalists that have written in the past hardly any have emerged who could retire on what they had made in journalism, much less could they afford the luxuries of life. The large majority of men who slave the better part of their lives in a newspaper office do it, believing mistakenly, I feel, that they are carrying on a mission and that they are playing a vital part in shaping the nation's destiny. It is an expensive belief, as most of them realize too late.

This is illustrated in at least three known cases. Sreenivasan of the *Free Press Journal*, who revealed he had

served on seven papers and known twelve dismissals, recently exclaimed: "I want a job from which I cannot be dismissed." From being the *de facto* editor of a leading morning paper, he found himself overnight editing a comparatively obscure weekly. Rama Rao, once editor of the *National Herald* at Lucknow, served on 17 newspapers and is now unemployed. Subramanyam, once Assistant Editor of the *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, was invited some months ago to become editor of *The Tribune* at Lahore. He accepted. Seven or eight months later he was relieved of the editorship. This lack of a stable job, this constant uncertainty is unhealthy in Indian journalism.

The lay public's opinion of journalism is not very flattering to the profession. It is generally believed that journalism means the reporting of meetings, the writing of editorials which no one reads, the sub-editing of news which comes from the agencies, which, according to the Indian lay public, are the authentic sources of news and information. Journalism, therefore, has been and is still being regarded as an occupation for mediocre brains.

That is the outside opinion on journalism. In journalism itself the feeling is that it is something of a crusade, and newspaper proprietors give the impression that the running of a newspaper is a sacrifice of time and money. We are the people's paper, is the general cry of the National press, though the fact is still unexplained why during the most acute newsprint shortage in India, nationalist papers carried the full quota of advertising, including large chunks of advertisements of National War Front, Defence, Recruiting and allied institutions. That money is the motive of journalism in India is not a fact which is discreditable to the profession. What is discreditable is that it should be pious humbug.

There is nothing wrong in a journalist taking money for what he writes, for writing is his living. So, if he were to write an article or a short story he is entitled to sell it to the highest bidder; if, for instance, anyone can

who wants his services to polish up or, as often happens, write up a whole speech to be delivered on the occasion of the Governor's visit to a family wedding or the opening of a factory, which is angling for Government orders, the journalist is perfectly at liberty to charge for what he writes. There is nothing wrong in ghosting for another man and putting into it views with which one does not agree, so long as the article appears in his name and not in the journalist's.

But Indian journalism doesn't stop at that. Instances are known when a man carrying on an illegal business has been exposed or threatened to be exposed in the columns of a paper, until hush money has been paid. Or again, an Indian prince who has got into the wrong sort of tangle is told that publicity of the wrong type would do him considerable damage and cause him much personal discomfort, unless.....Or a man may want himself written up, the sort of write-up which would come to the notice of the Governor of the province and get a title bestowed on the boosted person... or ... a dozen other things. From potatoes to princes, according to some, there's money in everything; there's gold in the garbage heap if only one knows how to dig for it. I know of a well-to-do man who gave a few thousands for War charity and wanted this fact known to the public at large. He had a column written on him. It cost him only two bottles of Scotch.

It is now common practice that papers in India charge for Chairmen's speeches; this explains why so many commercial enterprises find themselves so fully written up in the body of the paper. The only Chairman who, I know, has refused to pay for his speech appearing in the press is the Chairman of Tatas. "If it's not news to you, don't print it," is his attitude.

Perhaps the biggest racket is at the expense of the Indian film industry, which is not surprising when you bear in mind that the intelligence of many of the men who control the Indian film industry is very much below average.

## A PATHETIC SIGHT

27

All this takes away much of the joy of being in journalism, specially when I see honest, poor, god-fearing young men trudge miles to get the report of a political meeting, stand for hours waiting for a word from Mr. Gandhi or a statement from Jawaharlal Nehru, and come back the long distance feeling inspired by what they have brought back with them—the message which will fire the imagination of the country. These are the men who plod long hours in the dust and heat of Indian cities, and the only form of transport they know is a tram or a bus. And for all their years of labour they draw a mere pittance in the shape of salary. And don't tell me that this is because India hasn't got its freedom.

Yet how they come to journalism and still want to come! Young men from the colleges, often unable to write correct English, still believing that they have a hidden secret talent for writing, which is only waiting to be discovered. Journalism has for the young Indian almost the same glamour and fascination which Hollywood has for every young western flapper. For journalism they are prepared to make any sacrifice. They are willing to work as unpaid apprentices, putting in long hours of work, sub-editing agency messages, putting into shape announcements of public meetings, doing in general the most clerical of jobs, waiting as they all do for the chance of covering a big assignment—a chance that never comes to them. It is pathetic to watch these young men being taken on in newspaper offices, when it is obvious from the beginning that they will never get anywhere. For many it is a dead end, but nothing will induce them in their youth to believe it. For them there is a glory in journalism if not reward; for them it is a mission—a mission that has been much exploited.

One of the things one misses in Indian journalism is encouragement. Encouragement can come from the readers or the office. It must be said in fairness to the former that they are quite generous with their appreciation, though as everywhere in life, the appreciation

seldom comes from one's own friends who are only too anxious to debunk you, but rather from that greater circle of people, unknown as individuals—the middle class, the less fortunate in life, the people who although they have little themselves never seem to grudge anything to others, unlike the more fortunate who never can see a young man get on in life.

In the office, appreciation can come from two people: the editor, with whom one works day to day, or the proprietor, who is the Indian equivalent of the Press Lord in England. I know the case of a young man full of enthusiasm who was called by his editor only once in six years to be told: "The article you wrote today is good." That was the only spontaneous encouragement he ever received. But a young man needs something more than that. He needs constantly to feel that what he is writing is what the paper really wants. Guidance he must have but side by side must come appreciation. It is the driving force behind journalism. Its lack is one of the most disappointing features in our system. The tendency is that experiments are frowned upon and any departure from the rut is disliked.

I remember the story of a young apprentice who joined the staff of a newspaper in India. In the few weeks of work in the office he learnt how to sub-edit a Reuter message, how to underline twice to indicate capitals, once for italics, a stroke for lower case etc. One day he decided he would try his hand at reporting. There had trickled into the office that day a report of a woman who had thrown herself down from the second floor of a chawl and killed herself. The report read in the usual way: "On the morning of the 3rd February, at 9 a. m. Bai Gangubai, aged 24, wife of Gangaram, a labourer, is alleged to have thrown herself from the third storey of a chawl at Worli, as a result of which she sustained severe injuries. She was subsequently removed to the J. J. Hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries. The Coroner returned a verdict of suicide."

That wasn't good enough for the young man. So he put on his coat, took his umbrella and caught the bus to Worli, where he made a first-hand investigation of the incident. Three hours later he submitted the re-written draft. It now read:

### "WOMAN'S LEAP TO DEATH FOR LOVE"

Eternal Triangle in a Worli Chawl.

Midst the shabby environment of poverty and squalor, a woman threw herself to death, yesterday morning, because the man she loved had proved unfaithful to her. Unknown to the great majority of people in this city, this 24-year-old woman, Gangubai, had been a devoted wife to Gangaram, a mill-hand, who worked in a mill at Worli. By him she had two children. For some time now Gangaram had been arriving late from work and had been sparing in his attentions to his wife. Gangubai resented that. They had quarrelled the night before because he had not given her as much money as before. He had said that his wages had been cut, but this she found to be untrue. Eventually she discovered the real reason: it was another woman who had taken her place in her husband's affections. Thereupon she determined to put an end to her life and jumped from the third floor, falling on the cement pavement, which caused her death. The Coroner's verdict was one of suicide."

The editor read through the report. He pressed the bell. The apprentice was sent for.

"What is all this?" the editor asked him.

"Well, sir, I thought it would have human interest if I put it in this way."

The editor handed him back the manuscript. "I don't want human interest," he said, "Please stick to facts."

The young man never bothered to re-write a report again.

It is the function of a newspaper to have large human values. Whatever its politics or its policy, there are certain

events of world importance which affect the broad cross-section of the human race, whether it be British or German or Indian, and which must take pride of place over events of national importance, even though the latter may touch us more personally. If there were an earthquake in Paris it would in the British and American press take precedence over the news that either Mr. Churchill or President Roosevelt were found to have appendicitis. But in certain quarters of the Indian nationalist press, the diagnosis of hookworm in Mahatma Gandhi claimed pride of place over the news of the opening of the Second Front.

There is always this idea—almost an obsession—that the nationalist press has its mission to perform, an unending crusade, to which everything has to be sacrificed, even one's sense of proportion.

I remember another occasion, though I have forgotten what the paper was, except that it was a nationalist paper in India. It was during the dark days of the war, when hordes of German panzer divisions were marching towards the last bastion of Soviet civilization—Stalingrad. The common man of the whole world stood with bated breath watching every moment of the gruelling battle for survival—the battle for Stalingrad. In those days, those hours, even minutes, the fate of a world depended on what was happening outside the walls of Stalingrad. If Stalingrad were to fall, Hitler would have struck one more blow for Nazi victory—a blow which would have shattered Allied morale and made even the most ardent believers in democracy wonder whether might was after all right, and whether God, in the words of Madame Chiang Kai-shek, was on the side of big battalions.

At such a time as this with five million human beings in a death-grip unprecedented in the history of civilization, this paper, while carrying a headline to show the intensity of that battle, published on the same front page and on the upper half of it the solitary picture of an innocuous, obscure Indian in a Gandhi cap, who had offered *satya-*

*graha* somewhere and been arrested. The picture was not inspiring even to the most national-minded Indian. It was sheepish, and it made our own struggle appear insignificant and futile in comparison with the greater struggle of Stalingrad. As if this was not enough, there was an editorial note that day protesting that another *satyagrahi* who had been interned was given "C" class status as a prisoner instead of getting at least "B" class treatment, because the person in question was a Minister in the last Congress government.

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That was what was so disheartening about our own fight when balanced against the fight of other people in other parts of the world. We had become soft and so often childish that ours had become almost an academic struggle for freedom. Gone were the days when in India a man had bared his chest and said to the military squad, which threatened with pointed rifles, "Go on, fire!" Great as non-violence has been, it has emasculated the Indian national movement. The fault lay not with the man who first enunciated the idea. It lay in its practice, for non-violence demanded a standard of sacrifice which the average man was unable to live up to.

In December 1940, Mr. Rajagopalachari was arrested and brought before the Chief Presidency Magistrate. C. R. said: "I admit all the facts alleged in the charge." Mr. Abbas Ali, who was the Magistrate trying the ex-Premier quoted a few verses from the Bhagwat Gita and said he had to do his duty as a Magistrate, however unpleasant. "I hope and pray," the Magistrate added, "that you will soon come back and hold the exalted position as before." After expressing all these pious sentiments Mr. Abbas Ali sentenced Rajagopalachari to one year's simple imprisonment! The ex-Premier kept up this meaningless exchange of politenesses when he thanked the magistrate and regretted that he had caused some embarrassment to him.

It reminded me of a line from *Ninotchka*: "O Leon, why are you so good to me?"

It was not surprising that when our politics had lost all sense of proportion, our national press should suffer from the same loss. When the average man gets up in the morning and picks up his morning paper, what does he see? My own Gallop Poll reveals that among the readers of the *Times of India*, the majority of them look at the Pop cartoon and those who read the *Bombay Chronicle* look for Mutt and Jeff. But no editor can ever be convinced that as a rule editorials are the least read. The majority of newspapers in Britain have realized this long ago and they seldom indulge in anything more than an editorial note—a para or maybe two. It was so in the *Daily Express*; it was also the custom of the *Daily Herald*. And they sold—over two million copies each, while the *London Times* which indulged in profound thought in its long editorials, never hit the million mark.

How were these vast figures of circulation achieved? The answer was simple. The *Daily Express* of Lord Beaverbrook gave to the average man not only the best possible news in as concise a form as possible, but it constantly gave him articles which had human interest for the vast majority of its readers. It was once my ambition to write a feature page article for the *Daily Express*. I knew that if I wrote an article and sent it to them by post, I'd get it back the very next day. I knew this from experience. So I waited for my chance. One day I met the Features Editor and broached the subject to him. I showed him other stuff I had written. When he had finished glancing over it, I said: "Could you give me a break—just a trial?" He said: "Yes. Christmas will be coming soon."

"Christmas?" I said, "that's two and a half months ahead."

"Just about right."

I was a little perplexed. I waited for him to tell me more. He said : "Well, there will be millions of people buying millions of things, only at Christmas. Cakes, crackers, chocolates, all sorts of things. Find out what it all means—how many thousands of crackers, how many hundredweights of sultanas, plums, flour, just for that one day. There are whole industries which work all the year to produce the crackers which are used in that one week alone. Get the story and write it. I give you two weeks. If it's good, I'll take it. You'll get ten guineas.

I was so excited that I thanked him as if the money was already in my pocket. The very next day I had rung up Selfridges, and all the big London Stores and made appointments with their publicity departments who were willing to give me the details I wanted. I tramped from department to department collecting material. I trudged from store to store, the big ones as well as the small. I spent a week doing nothing but this. Then I settled down and spent another week writing it. When it was ready, I put on my best suit and took the bus to Fleet Street. I sent my name up and waited to be called. I waited for quite a while, when a dapper little girl in a scarlet sweater and a grey skirt came down.

"Can I help you?"

"I'd like to speak to the Features Editor."

"Personally?"

I explained that I had met him elsewhere and that he had asked me to do an article, which I had brought along.

"What is it about?"

"Christmas."

"Well, you see, the position is like this. The gentleman you spoke to, left us three days ago. He's gone to another job. And only yesterday we commissioned an article on Christmas. But you can see the new Features Editor if you want."

"No, thank you," I said, feeling a lump in my throat. I knew I was debunked. It was no use fighting against fate.

She saw my face fall. She said she was sorry. As a consolation I took her out to lunch, but I never made the feature page of the *Daily Express*. I suppose there is still time.

Often when I am asked how one learns to be a journalist, I say: "Read the *Express* and the *Herald*." Not just once, but from day to day, till you understand how a paper is planned, how it is laid out, how columns and columnists are built up, how news is displayed, how features fit in with the mood of the moment.

What perfect pieces of human interest James Douglas wrote! Frank Owen too was brilliant. He performed occasionally but one looked forward to these articles, for they were polished and to the point. Their language was smooth as satin and slick as chromium. There were no mistakes of typescript, no printer's devils. It wasn't as in some Indian papers where one reads that the "Maharajahs brought their pimp" when the writer meant they had brought their pomp. Nor would one see in a seven column headline streaming across the front page at the height of the civil disobedience movement: MAHATMA-JI'S APPEAL TO ASSES, when the Mahatma had really made his appeal to the MASSES.

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An Indian newspaper is never planned. It should often call itself *The Daily Miracle*. No standing instructions are ever given, nor any standard of values laid down. Each member of the sub-editorial staff deals with items as he likes and imports his own personal prejudices and animosities. The attack on Lord Moyne, with the background of the whole Middle East political problem, the dismissal of Nahas Pasha and Mr. Eden's visit to Cairo

appeared with no column top in 6 pt. type in a certain Indian newspaper, while the same newspaper a week before had given Shanta Apte's concert front page prominence.

Why should these things happen only in India? The answer is that in the printing press, till the late hours of night, almost till dawn, are to be found men working on thirty and forty rupees a month. They are called by the big name of proof readers. So tiresome is their job that you can see them straining their eyes to read the shabby manuscripts that trickle down to the press at all hours of the night. At the wage they earn they cannot possibly be very educated people. They can just barely read English. If there is a mistake in the original script, however obvious, they dare not correct it, for they do not know enough to correct what is written by the man upstairs. Their eyes tire quickly, and often you see them sleeping on the pavement outside, because they cannot afford to go home at night. What sort of proof-reading can you expect from them?

To go back to the Features. There was a period in London when news was slack and it became increasingly difficult to fill the columns of the papers with material which was interesting to the average reader. Nothing seemed to happen anywhere. One London newspaper came out with the placard "OMINOUS SILENCE FROM BULGARIA". In fact there was no news from anywhere.

If there is no news, news must be created, said the English Press Lords. First in the field was the *Daily Express*, which immediately began a search for the average Englishman. After some investigation and conference it published its own idea of the average Englishman. His height should be so much, his pay so much. He should be married and have a child. In detail it gave a complete description of the average man and asked its readers to send particulars of themselves. From the mass of applicants, the one that corresponded most nearly to their description was chosen as the *Daily Express Average Man*.

What did the *Daily Express* do with him? It gave him and his wife a whole week's holiday in London, escorted

every hour of the day by some of the best reporters on their staff who introduced them to every phase of London life—the Savoy, the theatre, the Opera, the Zoo. They were given a suite in one of the best West End hotels. Everything in London life which money could buy and time could afford was shown to them. The *Daily Express* printed the reporter's accounts of what the Average Man and his wife felt, said and did.

It is difficult at this distance of time to remember all that was said, nor is this important. It was the whole idea which was important, the taking of an Average Man over London and letting him give to other average men his impressions of London life. He was the Average Man's Ambassador to London. Wherever he went and whatever he said was important. Three million people—and more—would read for a whole week all about him. Amazing as it may seem, he made some of the most brilliant comments on London life. In many ways he was naïve. He felt uncomfortable in his new tail coat at the theatre. He was a little perplexed at the food offered to him, for it was so different to that to which he was accustomed. He said, eating the food of a well-known London hotel, that he preferred the steak and kidney puddin' his wife made. His comment on the people in the Savoy Grill, which was at that time the haunt of the intelligentsia and the Upper Four Hundred was terse. He wondered what fun people got sitting at tables and looking so glum. He was never bitter but his comment was caustic. It made people wonder whether the smart life of London was really worth the price they paid for it. To those who never had the chance of all that gaiety and glitter, he gave some consolation that the average man's was a richer life to live. The *Daily Express* had done its work. Its circulation continued on the upward trend.

That was journalism such as our Press Lords will never understand in India.



One of the nicer things I wrote never appeared in print. It was in the days when Jinnah was launching his campaign of Deliverance from the Congress. Just about that time I went to the Taj and met Dina Wadia. She was Jinnah's daughter. She was expecting a baby. When I went back to the office on night shift I wrote in my column: "Dina Wadia (née Jinnah) is also shortly to have her Day of Deliverance."

My editor sent for me. "You can't put this sort of thing in the paper," he said.

I said it was quite normal for a married woman to have a baby.

"Yes," he said, "but not in our paper."

So the blue pencil ran through my best line. In London I might have earned a couple of pounds for it, which is sometimes about the amount paid in India for a whole series of articles.

In all these years of journalism in India I am proud of two stories, both of which found print, one with difficulty.

The first was about the Aga Khan. It was someone's birthday party at the Taj and I was at a long table at which wine flowed as if it came from the Ganges. Next to us in a party was the Aga Khan and his Begum. It was in the days just before the war, which will explain the flowing of wine and help to identify which Begum I mean. The Taj used to keep open till late those days and sometime after the cabaret I felt the need to powder my nose. So I walked down the long passage to the Gent's Cloak Room, made my adjustments and came back. On my return I ran into the Aga Khan and his party which was retiring. They were waiting for the lift when I came smiling towards them. There was no reason for me to smile except that the world seemed kind and I felt that warmth of friendship for all mankind which comes only with good champagne.

To my surprise the Aga Khan smiled back at me. When I came near, I greeted him. He put out his hand and said: "And how are you?"

A little perplexed, I replied: "I am sure you don't remember me."

He gripped my hand tighter and replied: "Of course I do. Of course I do."

I looked round, sheepishly, a little bewildered at what was happening. I thought aloud and said: "It's very funny. We've never met."

The other story was in a different vein. It was a brothel story. It was Sunday night and I was working late at the *Bombay Chronicle* office, when I got a phone from an Oxford friend of mine, now in the Royal Marines, who had come to Bombay and located me. He was not staying long. I couldn't leave the office just then, so I asked him to come over to the office and see what we could do when my duty was over. At the office I learnt he had not dined. He was brave enough to try a *moorgi fry* which came from a near-by Irani shop and a glass of *falooda*, which was quite a novelty to him. I finished my work, took leave of my editor and left the office around one o'clock at night, which was an hour before my time.

We had talked that night about Oxford and all the friends we knew. The days we had spent together! It made me feel happy to remember that *once* I had lived life fully. As we stepped out of the *Chronicle* he said: "Show me some of the night life of Bombay."

"There isn't any, not of the type you mean. There is nowhere you can sit and sip brandy. No cabarets as in Paris. No coffee stalls. No night clubs. Nothing."

"Can't we get a drink?"

"At my house, yes."

"Can't I stand you a drink?"

"Only in a brothel."

“Okay, drive on.”

“It's gruesome. In places you see women behind bars. They are called 'cages'. Men bargain with them—four, eight annas—and when the deal is complete the bars are opened and the man goes in. That's not where we are going, but it's gruesome just the same. It's just filth, double plus.”

“But can you get a drink in a clean glass?”

“Yes, just about.”

So we drove to the red lamp area and stopped outside a joint which looked reasonably respectable. It was run by a Madame, who was perfectly charming. I indicated to her that our need was only drink.

“Only drink?” she asked. “No food?”, she added with a smile.

“No food,” I said.

We understood each other and she produced some bottles of English iced beer so scarce in this war. We had a drink and talked to her, while the more active members of the establishment sat like wall-flowers waiting to be gathered.

I got on very well with Madame and at a certain moment she asked what I did for a living. I said I wrote for a living.

“Journalist?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“You are just the man I was looking for.”

I felt a little worried, for when a brothel keeper says she is looking for you, it's time to get worried.

Without showing any signs of embarrassment I asked what for.

“I have to write Mrs. Churchill,” she said.

I didn't laugh, for I knew that fantastic ideas like these always occurred to people in such strange places. "Do you write to her often?" I asked.

With a somewhat foreign accent, for she was a Russian, she said: "You see I must reply Mrs. Churchill. She wrote very charming letter to me."

It was getting even more absurd, I thought, but I listened.

"You see I send ten thousand rupees to one man, they call Viceroy. Very big man, like Governor. I say I want that money to go to Russian women and children who are starving. So I write a letter and send him ten thousand rupees. The Viceroy write back and say thank you for contribution to War Puppusses Fund. I say what war puppusses? I send money for Russian women and children. So I fire him."

The idea of a brothel keeper firing the Viceroy of India appealed to me immensely.

She went on: "So he say he send to Mrs. Churchill. So I say I don't know Mrs. Churchill. I send to Russian women and children or send the money back. So I fire him. So he say Mrs. Churchill is collecting for Russian women and children and she is wife of British Prime Minister, so I say O.K."

"And what did Mrs. Churchill say?"

"She wrote very nice letter," the Madame said. "Maisie, bring that frame on my table. That silver frame near my bed."

Maisie obeyed and when she returned I felt a little ashamed of myself, if only that I had not believed the woman's story. Yes, Mrs. Churchill had written a very nice letter—a letter which this Russian woman from the red lamp district of Bombay had put into a silver frame.

"So you see, if you write me a nice letter to Mrs. Churchill, I send another ten thousand rupees."

I was too dazed to reply. Amidst the squalor and filth of the foulest locality of the city in which I lived, I had seen with my own eyes a deed done unostentatiously by a woman who knew charity in the highest sense of that word. How different it was from the charities of our titled gentry for which they always wanted mention made in the papers and which came from coffers far larger than those which this woman had. I wrote this story for the *Chronicle* though in a shorter form. The comment of my more "intelligent" friends was: "Who is interested in the fact that you went to a brothel?" It was the comment of that India so far behind the times.

When I pick these two bits out of the mass of stuff—some good, some bad, some indifferent—which I have written in all these years, sometimes with all my heart, sometimes with an eye on the clock—it is a matter of personal preference. Different people are affected differently by the same piece of writing.

Even experts differ on the merits or demerits of a piece of writing. I found this out for myself when I wrote my first novel. It was then entitled *We Ungrateful Sons*. I showed it to a good London publisher, whose reader reported that the first part of the book was good, but that the latter portions lacked finish. The publisher suggested my re-writing the latter half. I showed it to another, even better-known. His readers liked the latter half of the book, which had action according to them, but the first half "needed complete re-writing." Fed up with these reports I decided to shelve the book and three or four years later I changed its title to *Just Flesh*, gave it a jacket on which appeared a pierrot undressing a pierette and the book went into five profitable editions! The world is like that, I suppose.

One of the sad stories I covered was that of a man who had escaped from a Nazi concentration camp and was on his way to the Far East in July 1939, on a refugee steamer which had docked in Bombay for a while. A

friend of mine who had seen the man on board rang me up and I went to see him. It was a sight I shall never forget: an old Jew,—his age was about sixty then—who had been a victim of Hitler's terror. He had spent six months in a Nazi concentration camp, and when he came out of it he was broken and emaciated, and without a whole right foot, which I learnt to my horror had frozen away. I saw the leg. It made me feel sick for hours. Everything had happened after the conquest of Austria. Some eighteen thousand people were taken into that concentration camp. Chosen at random, they were made to suffer in order to strike terror into the hearts of the rest of the people. It was part of the same technique as "Baptism by fire". In large groups, as they came, they were assembled at the headquarters of the Gestapo, where they were given their first beating—a Nazi welcome. For three days they remained there, till arrangements were made for transport to the concentration camp—without food and only half a glass of water to quench their thirst. They were next removed to a railway track, under cover of night, where they were put into freight wagons, ordinarily used to transport horses. In these, packed like sardines and standing for sixteen hours on a non-stop journey, again without food and water, they arrived at the station nearest the concentration camp to which they were assigned. As they were unloaded from the wagon, they were made to run as fast as they could for half an hour, so that when they arrived at the camp, their condition was one of complete exhaustion. In the camp they slept on mattresses with only a convict's shirt and a loose pantaloons in the severest German winter. No underwear, no blankets, not even a pair of socks. At four next morning, they were awakened and taken out to the yard, where they were made to lie down on the cobbled ground. Those who wore spectacles were asked to remove them. And while they lay still on the ground, they were beaten, after which they began their day's work with the first morsel of food in five days. All this was part of Nazi disciplinary routine.

The Jew also told me the story of a man in the same camp who was made to stand erect and at attention for three whole days, because he was a noted athlete and the Nazis wanted to show that he was really not so tough after all. He stood the three days and when he moved it was only to fall dead.

More than ten per cent. of the victims in that concentration camp froze to death. Many more who could not endure the cruelty inflicted on them, committed suicide by running into the barbed wire fences which were charged with electricity to prevent them from escaping.

But Indian journalism did not encourage the writing of stories like these. Features were not valued. They did not find the place they deserved and often the payment given to the writer was the miserable sum of five rupees. It was not that Indian newspapers could not afford to pay their contributors. It was always this peculiar mentality—of never wanting to raise the standard of living of anyone that worked around, with or for you. When articles could be got for much less from syndicates that operated from abroad, the individual Indian journalist had little chance of making a living in this country. With the coming into existence of the USOWI (U.S. Office of War Information) and its free distribution of syndicated articles, a further blow was struck to the already low wage-earning capacity of the Indian journalist.

All this may be forgiven; though one cannot forgive the lifting bodily of articles from English and American papers—which appeared to be a speciality of a section of the nationalist Indian press. Occasionally this may be permissible, but that newspapers professing to believe in the Gandhian doctrine of truth and non-violence should practice journalistic theft on a large scale—for these articles were never paid for—merely because there was no means of detection, nor anybody to enforce the copyright, was a little disillusioning in the India of our ideals. When the ethics of journalism are under

review, this must come first on the agenda.

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As guardians of Indian journalism, there suddenly sprang up in our midst a body of men, editors by profession, who attended the first All-India Newspapers Editors' Conference. They began well. They formed themselves into custodians of the rights of the press and protested against such Government action as impinged on that privilege. Editors met periodically to discuss the desirability of coming into a Gentleman's Agreement with Government in order to preserve Freedom of Expression without hindering the war effort of the country. Endless correspondence ensued between Government and a representative committee of the editors till finally on the front-pages of every newspaper in India appeared the news that both Government and the editors had decided to become Gentlemen and play cricket. Readers were regaled for the next few weeks with editorials which praised Government's prudence in coming to a settlement and the Agreement was hailed as the *Magna Charta* of the Indian Press. Hardly had the ink dried on the Gents' Agreement, when editors were found hustling on the Frontier Mail to New Delhi to attend a second conference which was hastily convened to protest against the breach by Government of the Gents' Agreement resolved upon at the first Conference. After much discussion and as much correspondence, with an occasional interview with the Viceroy thrown in, it was decided to have another Gents' Agreement to replace the one already broken. So it went on, in complete disregard of the slogans "Travel Less" and "Use Less Paper". In the end the editors got so used to running between Delhi and Bombay that no one could keep any track either of the Conferences, the Agreements or the Editors. The younger men rather liked these periodical Editors' Conferences. Although nothing would come out of them in the shape of *swaraj* for India, it brought interim periods of home rule in the office. For in

the absence of the editors, journalists enjoyed Two Freedoms: Freedom from Office Hours and Freedom from the Blue Pencil.

Gradually but surely even the editors forgot that they were fundamentally guardians of the rights of the press. Like old women, they switched over from guarding rights to become moral instructors and decided to inquire into the desirability of discouraging "Obscene writing", a matter which could appropriately be controlled by the editors themselves instead of being made an item for discussion at such a conference. All this is to be found in the Standing Committee's resolutions passed at the Lahore Session. But the rank and file of younger men, too tired to protest, too disillusioned to believe that even their editors could march in step, could not even laugh at the sight of the Editors going into conference as journalists and coming out a handful of Charley's Aunts.

It was all part of this India.

### III

#### SAMPLE OF ADMINISTRATION

IN JULY 1943, ACCORDING TO A REUTER MESSAGE BEARING a Westminster dateline, Mr. Amery with the whole machinery of the Government of India to draw upon for information, replied to a question on India in the House of Commons. Mr. Amery spoke of "the present difficult food situation in India" and he gave four reasons which had given rise to that situation. Among them was "the fact that Indians were eating more per head as a result of increased incomes."

Barely two weeks passed after that utterance when decent, self-respecting Indians awoke one morning to read in their papers the shocking news that as many as 29 dead

bodies had been recovered from the streets of Calcutta in one single day. They were even more horrified at the revelation that these deaths were due to starvation. Some of the most grim and gruesome tales came to us from Bengal: a boy was fighting with a hungry dog for a morsel of food; jackals and dogs had been attacking people in whom life was not quite extinct; hospitals were found unable to cope with the number of starvation cases; people were actually dying in the open streets and the second city of the Empire was flooded by thousands of hungry and destitute people who had left their homes, their villages, their kith and kin, in the most desperate food hunt of our generation. They had sold their chattels. They had sold their own children. So unbelievable were some of the stories that reached us that I was sent by my paper to see things for myself.

My assignment before this had been Chungking, that glorious war-time capital of China and when I returned from it I was feeling inspired by what I had seen and by the spirit of that people who refused to accept defeat. Although men and women had died there by the thousands, this seemed unimportant because of the cause for which they were dying. And the thousands who were dead seemed insignificant in terms of the millions who were still alive and free. So that my predominant feeling at that time was one of exaltation and not defeat. Chungking had renewed my faith in the greatness of man, and when I came back I felt a richness within me, for I had seen man in all his glory.

But what I felt throughout my three weeks in Bengal was no feeling of richness and no exaltation of spirit. And what I brought back with me was only the story of defeat—a sad, sad tale of a people, battered, bent and broken; succumbing silently to an enemy they could neither see nor hold, and what was even more tragic—for no purpose at all. I watched this ugly mass of emaciated people, hungry, naked, withered—stripped of their morale, stripped of their

ability to resist, stripped also, by the primeval urge of hunger, of human feelings and civilized decency.

The causes of the Bengal famine were somewhat complex. For simplicity's sake I would put it down to (1) Nature (2) A governor who lost his nerve (3) An administration which faltered.

It was now an open secret, and corroborated by later evidence, that the food policy of Bengal was laid down by the Governor of the province in conjunction with or under the instructions of the Army, without any reference whatsoever to the Indian ministers responsible to the legislatures.

Herbert laid down and carried out the famous "Denial Policy". Under the "Denial Policy", which was really "economic scorched earth," large numbers of boats, barges, carts, essential to the farmer of East Bengal to carry his foodgrain to the market, were taken away from him and destroyed. Transport in some of those areas in East Bengal was put out of operation and it was impressed upon the farmer that he should grow only that amount of rice which was essential to his personal needs. The farmer was, therefore, discouraged from building up any reserve, for everything dissuaded him from reaping a good harvest, which he knew could not, in any case, be marketed. Therefore, it was not, as Amery said, a case of the farmer withholding rice and being reluctant to market his crops. It was rather as if Herbert had instituted a GROW LESS FOOD campaign.

Consequently the soil deteriorated and the harvest generally suffered. Add to that all the other causes which aggravated the famine—the havoc caused by nature in certain other parts of Bengal where cyclones and floods washed away the toil of months of labour; the presence on that Eastern frontier of a large army which completely unbalanced the economic equilibrium; the loss of Burma rice; the rise in population; the rise in the cost of living; and numerous other causes—and the Denial, as Herbert had visualized it, was complete.

The amazing and inexplicable fact was that while there was this acute shortage of rice in India, our administration continued to ship rice abroad, even to South Africa which showed its gratitude by passing the Pegging Bill.

For one whole year after Japan had been at war with us, there was not even a department of Food in the Government of India, when everywhere else in the world this was one of the first steps.

It is now part of ancient history how the whole Food Policy of Bengal lacked in vision and foresight and, as a result, a horrible mess had been made of the lives of the common people by all the Governments concerned. I cannot help feeling, however, that had our own politicians, instead of making capital out of this tragedy for the sake of party advantage, come together, they would have become one united, strong and representative body of Indian national public opinion, which neither the Government of India, nor Whitehall, nor the Governor of Bengal would have been able to flout. Instead we saw the painful sight of Muslims thinking in terms of Muslim relief and Hindus retaliating by thinking in terms of Hindu relief—and I am afraid the score was about equal on both sides.

Shankar of the *Hindustan Times* drew at that time a most brutal cartoon of relief from the Wakf Funds. It showed prominent Muslims on a dais and near them a cauldron in which the gruel was cooking and a long line of famished people carrying their small earthenware pots in their hands. And in that cartoon, the Chief Muslim before doling out the spoonful of gruel asked the famished man: 'Are you a Muslim?' This was only a cartoon but many a true word is said in jest.

In refreshing contrast to this were the editorials of the *Statesman*, a British-owned and British-controlled paper. It was heartening for an Indian to read the editorials of this British paper on Bengal and on Mr. Amery. In its editorial of October 17, the *Statesman* said:

...The continuous appearance of effort of persons somewhere within India's governmental machine, perhaps out here, perhaps in Whitehall, to play down, suppress, distort or mislead the truth about Bengal is dragging the fair name of the British raj needlessly low..."

The extent of the Bengal famine has never been correctly represented to the outside world. The magical wand of censorship did the disappearing trick over much of the authentic news. Mr. Amery said in Parliament on 14th October that the weekly death-rate presumably from starvation, *for the Province including Calcutta*, was about 1,000—“or it might be more.”

On 18th October, that was four days after Mr. Amery's statement, the Health Officer of the Calcutta Corporation announced that the mortality in the City of Calcutta alone, presumably from all causes, for the week ending October 16 had been 2,154. The corresponding figure, worked on an average of 5 years, was 573. The figure given in Government statements of deaths in the Calcutta hospitals alone totalled 591. Adding the figure of 573 to 591 we got a total of 1,164 and subtracting that from the figure given by the Health Officer we got 990 or say 1,000 deaths unaccounted for. Allowing for a certain rise in population we still failed to understand why there was this sudden and sharp rise in the death-rate which had not been accounted for. The fact was that these were the starvation deaths that had occurred outside the hospitals. So that nearly a thousand people died every week of starvation in the City of Calcutta alone *outside* the hospitals, while 500 died *within* the hospitals.

The population of Calcutta was 3 million, that of Bengal 60 million. If we work it on a population basis and multiply 1,500 by 20 we get the colossal figure of 30,000 people dying in Bengal per week because of starvation. Making certain adjustments and allowing for the large influx of people into the city and writing off 20,000 to allow for errors of calculation on a conservative and cautious esti-



anything like a correct picture of what was happening in that real Black Hole of Bengal. It was not only because of the individual cases which we read of in the papers that the situation was so tragic, but because of the vastness of their suffering and the utter helplessness of those people. In this age of bitter inhumanity one is apt to listen with cold disinterest to fresh tales of horror. But one could not live in Bengal in the days of the famine without being moved by the sight of these gaunt, hungering people, panting, exhausted and dragging themselves over hundreds of miles in search of a bowl of rice.

The fact that 10,000 people died every week may seem nothing to those at a distance until you heard the groan of these hungry men and women which pierced the stillness of the night, till it got you under the skin and ruffled your soul. And then the wailing of those children for *fan*, which was the water of rice. This starchy liquid gave them a temporary feeling of a full stomach, but it was not nutritious and caused anaemia and after a while the legs and hands and even the rest of the body got swollen.

Wherever I went, I saw human skeletons without an ounce of flesh on their bodies, just literally skin on the bare bones of the human body, such as you see in any anatomy class. I saw them fretting like this for a few days on the open streets till one thought they had quietened down and fallen asleep. But they never woke up again, and when the smell got too objectionable someone realized that the man was dead and he was removed perhaps to be burnt, perhaps to be buried, but often just to be thrown away. They just couldn't afford to pay for the dead, when they couldn't even afford to pay for the living.

Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee told me how in the first days in Calcutta a crowd would gather at the sight of an exhausted famished man. Then someone would rush to call an ambulance and have him taken to hospital. But the hospitals were full and the beds that were empty were reserved for such casualties as might be caused by an air-raid,

with the result that the ambulance would come back with the famished man and leave him where they found him and there he would be allowed to die—there on the open streets of the Empire's Second City, I suppose to enjoy after the war the Four Freedoms so much advertised in this country. And if I remember rightly Freedom from Want was one of them. It was rather ironical, I thought at that time, that this same man would have been entitled to one of those empty beds if he had been struck by a Japanese bomb, but suffering from a silly little thing like starvation was a different affair.

In one of the villages I visited my guide was a local pleader. He was not the sort of man who had either imagination or creative genius for fiction, so that I believed what he said about the happenings in that village where he was showing me round. Sitting with me in his strip of garden just outside his thatched-roof shack he pointed to a spot just across the way from his house. He said: "A week ago I was sitting here and I saw a woman on that spot across the road nursing her child which was not even a year old. She didn't moan or cry, nor did she even so much as move. The child was quietly sucking its mother's breast and it went on like that for some time—for some two hours. When I saw some people had gathered round her. I also went there out of curiosity only to find that she had been dead for hours and her child which was alive had been struggling to drink its dead mother's milk."

I saw a man in Calcutta being carried away—I don't know whether he was dead or alive, nor did it really matter, and where his seat was, where in the human body the flesh is round, he had no flesh at all and it had curved in.

I saw a woman who two days before had thrown away her child into the river because she couldn't see it suffer and die. I saw another woman, she was old, a widow, and when I saw her she was raving mad. She had

lost five grown up sons in the space of seven days. They had died before her very eyes.

I saw another woman whose child had died and she had been given four rupees to have it cremated and she was fighting to get three-eight back from the cremators because she maintained she was entitled to the profit. Never before in the history of our civilization, have our people so degraded themselves.

I saw a youngster of four cry, when I gave him a small piece of sweetmeat, a single piece of *jalebi*, because he had not seen food for days.

I saw a group of boys and girls run to the empty cocoanut shell which I had thrown away and fight for it. There was about an ounce of cocoanut left in it.

I saw my man servant stop eating, get up and give his plateful to three little kids who were mournfully and silently looking at him. No one could eat, one felt so ashamed. Even the dogs had shrivelled up because there was nothing left for them in the dustbins when man had finished with them.

Returning from Nadaripur, the furthest point East which I touched, I caught the midnight steamer which took me eventually along the Padma river by which route via Goalundo I returned. It was late at night when I left the shack to get to the quayside where the steamer was waiting. Along the little winding path we walked in the bright moonlight under the shadow of the palms. The tin-covered shacks of townspeople were on either side. Most of them were asleep and their homes were in darkness except for the occasional flicker of a kerosene lamp. It was quiet except for the wailing of a solitary child. He was lying cuddled on the doorstep of someone's shack, his little hands were holding his head, for I think it was feeling faint. We switched on the torch and saw he was barely four or five. He was muttering something I could not understand, it was part of his wail. I asked

the man with me what he was saying. " *Ma, I am going,*" the little boy was saying. " Just give me one morsel before I die".

In the next morning's paper I saw that the Princes of India had reiterated their loyalty to Lord Linlithgow on the eve of his departure, and referring to his services to India, said: " Your Viceroyalty has been associated with some of the landmarks in the history of India." That little boy in Nadaripur was obviously one of the landmarks, for not once did Linlithgow visit that famine-stricken area.

All this was just a sample of administration in India. It explained why for us, in our souls, the Moon was always down. Yes, Steinbeck, the same moon.

## IV

### POLITICS

WHEN I RETURNED TO INDIA IT WAS GANDHI WHO DOMINATED the Indian scene. More than any other single individual, he had stood the test of time. He had acquired the status of a leader in the eyes of the world, for he had influenced the mind and heart of his country and swayed its politics. Gandhi was India. His influence had grown beyond all expectations. His power to mould the destiny of his people was almost unquestioned, and it was an accepted fact that no agreement could be arrived at between Britain and India which was not ratified by Mahatma Gandhi. The word " Mahatma " was used not only by way of reverence. Through the years he had elevated himself to that status. He was the symbol of a people's will to resist. As Chungking was symbolic of an indomitable China, so Wardha symbolized an India marching towards freedom.

From each campaign of civil disobedience he came out wielding more influence and more power than before.

While he addressed himself ostensibly to the masses, the impressive thing about his success was that large numbers of thinking Indians came within his spell and acknowledged him as their leader also. The years in jail gave him poise and dignity. He spoke with an authority which no one challenged. Time and again he revealed an intuition which was almost uncanny. He extricated himself from every difficult situation with so much grace and so much subtlety that the moral victory always seemed to be on his side. His manner was not that of a dictator striding like a colossus over the face of his country, but rather of a hermit whose abode had become a shrine.

Gandhi stood for three main things: One, *swaraj*; two, non-violence; three, the Harijans. He adhered to these so faithfully that at times he appeared to be a robot in Gandhism. Perhaps his greatest weakness was that he never allowed for the element of human nature and the vagaries of the average man, who could hardly stand the strain of that consistency which his tenets demanded. Another unhealthy feature from the point of view of the country was that he commanded the instant and immediate obedience of his followers and of the Congress which he had nursed and built up to become the vast organization which it had become. It was unhealthy inasmuch as the following was at times too docile and at others too intolerant of criticism of his major decisions. Out of a democrat, it made of him a virtual dictator. It was unhealthy in a nation aspiring to democracy that one man alone should continually dictate policy. The tragedy of India is that while it has produced a few giants like Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru, Raman, Aurobindo, the average Indian is still a poor fish.

One of the main reasons for Gandhi's growing influence was that he had produced results. For the first time in the history of India, popular ministries had come into office. In seven out of eleven provinces the Congress ruled supreme. Although the Central Government was still a bureaucracy and the veto of the Viceroy the last trump

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card, it was impressive to see Indians in office in eleven provinces. All this would never have been possible but for the agitation which for years the Mahatma had carried on, the sustained resistance he had offered in his civil disobedience movements, the skill with which he had given the nation's demand a cohesive force. *Satyagraha* once regarded as the eccentricity of a handful of agitators had evolved into a movement. That was Gandhi in March 1938, when I returned to India.

Today another man has come on the scene. Occasionally he steals the headlines. From being nothing more than a discarded Congressman, Mohamed Ali Jinnah has made himself the supreme leader of 92,000,000 Muslims. At least that is his claim. He even got a tag for himself to rival that of the Mahátma. He is called the Quaid-e-Azam. He formed the Muslim League and gave it a policy and a platform. He made the Muslim cause appear so important that it baulked the Congress and the whole national effort, for no one could speak in terms of independence for India, without settling accounts with Jinnah, who claimed to speak for a little less than a quarter of the total population.

The Hindu-Muslim question reached a new phase at the time of the Round Table Conference. Lord Sankey, then the Lord Chancellor, presided over those deliberations. It was his genius which brought the problem out in such a perspective as to justify the continuance of the British raj in India. Jinnah found that he got almost unbelievable support from the British Government, and for the first time it dawned on him that maybe it was too little to ask only for safeguards for his community. From then on he began to think of the problem on a different plane. Soon he enunciated the idea of a separation, of carving out a portion of the country which would exclusively belong to the Muslims. While the Congress was still thinking in terms of fighting the issue of separate electorates, Jinnah's genius had taken him very much further. The day he realized that Britain was keen on

building him up as a factor to be reckoned with in framing a constitution for the new India, he saw the vision of a separate Muslim State within the geographical boundary of India, a state entirely independent.

So the idea of Pakistan from being a poet's dream became a political platform. In its original form, it was popularly understood to mean two things: One, a certain amount of autonomy to the Muslims, who could dominate the provinces where they were in a majority. Two, that on all big issues which affected the country as a whole, there would be a Federal organization which would be supreme. In other words on matters of internal policy, within the sphere of Pakistan, the Muslims would enjoy autonomy. But on the other All-India issues, such as foreign policy, international trade, communications, it would be the Federal Assembly that would be the sovereign body.

The early reaction of the Congress was to minimize the political importance of Jinnah. The fact that the Congress controlled seven provinces was sufficient proof that it had the upper hand in Indian politics. Congress ministries functioned as far north as the North-West Frontier, which was unquestionably Muslim in majority, and Jinnah was regarded as a crank who had an obsession for separating the two major communities. To a certain extent the Congress was right. It was in possession—as the legal expression goes—of power in India. Jinnah's claims were based on theoretical premises. One fact, however, the Congress overlooked. It was this: while the Muslims were with the Congress in its effort to shake off the foreign yoke, they were likely to resent that, with the transference of power, they should be brushed aside and made to play a minor role in the great drama of Indian politics.

When provincial autonomy first came into existence, the Congress had not the vision to set up coalition Governments or, in simple language, to share the spoils. It thought itself too powerful. There was no need to share

this newly acquired power with another political organization, which it did not even countenance. So the orthodox Muslims were out of the administration. Instead, to appease those who criticized the Congress refusal to adopt coalitions as being a little high-handed, the Congress adopted what might be called the stooge-system. It took into its Ministries, Muslims willing to sign the Congress pledge in return for a seat in the Cabinet. With the exception of one man, these Muslims were not Congressmen in the real sense of the word. They were at best collaborationists.

But genuine Muslim representation was missing from these Ministries, with the result that there came to the Congress a marked Hindu bias. Many of the Congress Ministers and under-Secretaries were really not trained for the jobs with which they were entrusted. They had come from all walks of life, somewhat like the first Labour Government in Britain. Often they had no background. They saw themselves lifted from hereditary poverty, which they attributed to the presence of the British in India, to a position which they could use to their own advantage. The Congress pledge had imposed on them a limitation of salary—five hundred rupees, a ridiculous figure for any person in that position. But that was in the pledge and no one could go back upon it. All the same, with the five hundred rupees often came an unknown quantity for which the Congress had made no provision, and in many cases the acceptance of Congress office at such a ridiculously low salary became almost a licence.

My mind goes back to a rainy afternoon in London when after lunch at a smart Mayfair hotel, I asked the commissioner for a cab. He whistled once and a cab drove up from a rank hardly twenty yards away. He opened the door for me, saluted. All this ceremonial cost sixpence or a shilling, but I had no loose silver on me and asked if he had change.

“Certainly, sir,” came the reply.

I looked into my wallet. I had only one well-guarded note—five pounds—in those student days a rare thing to possess.

I thought I had beaten him, for how could a flunkey have change for five pounds? But he gave me the change all in half-crowns, shillings and sixpences, and he had plenty more to spare.

Later when I knew him better I asked him what they paid him.

"We don't get paid, sir," he replied with the air of a man of the world. "We pay for our jobs."

"What do you mean by 'pay for our jobs'?"

"Well, sir, it's like this. You see they gives us a uniform which we have to pay for. It costs anything upto two or three hundred pounds a year. We make money from gents like you and we pay for the uniform. We keeps the rest."

"But is it worth it?"

"Betcher life, it is."

Very often I felt the Congress salary for its Ministers was something like that.

All this was disillusioning. The glamour of power affected human nature more than the flesh could resist, and in many instances those who suddenly found themselves in power, did not have any background or character, or any means wherewith to resist the temptations that were offered. The Congress in office did not do anything more vicious than what other governments had done. Favouritism to some extent was current in those days as before or since, but while one expected this as a normal feature of other administrations, it was disheartening to see it occur under the Congress.

That was the big blow. At heart the Congress, as judged from men like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, is sound. It is in this respect like the broad masses that go to make up this country of

ours—the four hundred million people, who are fundamentally decent, God-fearing, and who reveal in their normal lives a loyalty to those whose cause they serve. But when it came to taking over power and running the administration of a country from day to day, the ideals which the Congress set before it, seemed to fade away.

Look at the question of prohibition. Although it was impracticable, with the glaring example of the United States to go by, the Congress made it the first item of its programme, when other more important issues, wherein the Congress would have got more general support, remained untackled.

In those days, permits were issued, generally speaking, to three classes of people: One, to Europeans; two, to habitual consumers, under a medical certificate; three, to Parsees for religious ceremonies. As I was not a European, nor a confirmed consumer, nor, although a Parsi, did I need it for religious ceremonies, I refrained from applying for a permit. Nor did I avail myself of black-market permits which immediately came on the scene, nor of that mass of liquor which went underground and was as easily available as in the boot-legging days in the United States, for my feeling was that although the restriction was unnecessary and a little irksome, it was only fair that one should consider it in terms of the greater good it might bring to the millions of people who drank country liquor in excess and ruined their lives in doing so. I thought of the mill-hands whom I had seen drunk outside toddy and liquor shops, unable to hold their drink. I thought of their wives and children at home who cried because the breadwinner had squandered his pay in a single night. Perhaps I could make a little sacrifice for the greater welfare of my countrymen. That was my attitude.

One day I went to the house of a Congress leader in the fullest sense of that word. We drank whisky together. We talked of Congress policy and the bigger issues of the Indian problem, while sipping the delicious beverage of

Scotland. When I came home that day, I regarded myself as a bit of a sucker.

All these were minor things on the larger canvas of the Indian problem, but they involve matters of principle and influence, by example, hundreds and thousands of men. What was shown up by them was the weakness which came from lack of discipline, lack of training and lack of character in those who were shot to the front rank because they were the only ones available, the really able men finding it impossible to be hypocritical enough to say that in such positions they would live and bring up and educate a family on the sum of five hundred rupees.

Not long ago, one of the more brilliant Oxford dons, A. L. Rouse, an intellectual and ardent socialist, wrote in *The World Review* a very striking article on the future of the British Labour Party. Rouse discussed at length the various occasions on which the party had thrown away chances and how a demoralization had set in because of its refusal to rejuvenate itself and to cut itself adrift from those forces which hung round its neck like a dead weight. "Last year," Rouse says, "it (the Labour Party) had the opportunity of making Mr. Morrison its Treasurer; a most important post which might have given him some chance of putting the party organization in order and giving it a new spirit. The Party, with its eyes wide open, chose Arthur Greenwood. The truth must be said by someone: the Labour Party has nothing to expect from Mr. Greenwood, neither a new impulse nor a new spirit. And the worst of all signs of its demoralization is that it knows it perfectly well, and goes on to turn down a Morrison for a Greenwood. A party that does that sort of thing does not mean business and is certainly unfit for power."

"Even more important than the age question is the question of their competence to be Members of Parliament at all. The plain fact must be admitted that the bulk of Labour M. P's are not sufficiently educated to take an informed or useful part in conducting the affairs of a great

country. Most of them know something about the coal mines or unemployment benefit—often from personal experience—or local government or social services; and that is something. But the great bulk of them are uneducated men and completely at sea in the great issues of foreign and imperial policy. Look how hopelessly ignorant they are about the affairs of the Commonwealth, or of the Empire, or India; or our relations with other powers; or the complex problems of currency (which sank them once before in 1931 !) or trade regulation; or for that matter of education. Most of them have come to look to the Prime Minister as a sort of headmaster of an elementary school of which they are the scholars and occasionally ask him how to pronounce some word in the English language. And that about represents the correct state of affairs."

How true all this also was of the Congress in office ! Add to that, pettiness of mind, little jealousies to gain favour with the Mahatma and the Congress High Command, and the Indian picture is complete.

Jinnah saw through this very clearly. Though not cut out for leadership in terms of world values, Jinnah was head and shoulders above the average Congressmen who had already accepted office and who, by reason of their being in office, went so far as to pronounce judgment on him. Jinnah felt that he, who was a far abler man and better qualified to represent India, had been brushed aside, because democracy in its initial stages, with the broad mass of people still uneducated and unable to think for themselves, does not always choose the best man for the job. This drove him further away from the Congress. He became its most bitter opponent and the most powerful argument for the opponents of Indian freedom.

Hitherto, the argument that India could not be given self-government because of the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims, was only so much eye-wash. Although it was used by every spokesman of Britain, every Viceroy, every Secretary of State, every British Prime Minister, we still believed—and until recently had reason

to believe—that it only touched the fringe of our problem, and that apart from certain differences as in customs and ways of living, the two communities were basically Indian, sharing a common desire to be free and believing in that greater entity which was Indian nationhood. This idea was expressed so well by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, that, though I have quoted him elsewhere, I find it necessary to requote his words for the proper understanding of Muslim feeling before Jinnah enunciated the idea of Pakistan.

Azad said in his speech at Ramgarh: "I am a Muslim and I am proud of that fact. Islam's splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilization are my wealth and fortune. It is my duty to protect them.... But in addition to these sentiments I have others also, which the realities and conditions of my life have forced upon me. The spirit of Islam does not come in the way of these sentiments. It guides and helps me forward. I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity which is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim..... Eleven hundred years of common history have enriched India with our common achievements..... Everything bears the stamp of our common endeavour. There is indeed no aspect of our life which has escaped this stamp. Our languages were different but we grew to use a common language; our manners and customs were dissimilar, but they acted and re-acted on each other and thus produced a new synthesis. This joint wealth is the heritage of our common nationality."

That was the sort of outlook which had made the Indian case strong and almost irrefutable by any British argument. Today, however idealistic that point of view may be, it is entirely divorced from fact. Jinnah has played his cards so well and the Congress at the very same

time has been at such a low ebb of thought and action, that the issue of Pakistan has become a fundamental issue in the India of today. Just as it was true before, that no settlement of the Indian question could be satisfactory without the sanction of the Mahatma, it was now correct to say that no settlement could be final without the concurrence of Jinnah. How heart-rending it is for a young Indian to come to the painful realization that with the years of struggle, instead of coming nearer to our goal, we were going further and further away.

To understand Pakistan, it is necessary first to know Mohamed Ali Jinnah. As far as one is aware, Jinnah came from an ordinary middle-class family with no family pretensions of any sort. He had a certain ability and application and he paid the customary visit to England to get the varnish, once so essential to success in India. He returned a Barrister-at-Law and practised at the Bar. Already early in life, he caused quite a sensation by marrying out of his community the daughter of a Parsi Baronet, the former Sir Dinshaw Petit. This was a slap in the face of orthodoxy, which was intolerant of mixed marriages, more so then than now. His wife died early and there was only one child of that marriage, a daughter who later married a Christian. All this was a great disappointment to Jinnah who found that both his personal and public life had made him feel lonesome and bitter. Only one person had remained with him in his old age—his sister.

From this bitterness Pakistan evolved. Somehow he transplanted his own bitterness into the souls of his brethren. His desire to be alone he gave as a legacy to his community and created in them also a desire to be alone and separated from all others who did not subscribe to the Prophet's faith. To the Muslim, anything that touched his religion made an instant call. In effect Jinnah said to the Muslims: "Let us who are Muslims and followers of the Prophet go our way and work out our own destiny and leave the others to theirs." He found and

stressed that common denominator which would bind 92,000,000 men together and made them feel bounden to him for having found them that unity. He was willing to break up that greater entity which was India, that new synthesis of which Abul Kalam Azad spoke, for he knew he could be like a King in Muslim India and leave a name among his own people, while the Congress, which claimed to speak for all India would never give him such a chance.

Jinnah had certain limitations and he was aware of them. For the leadership of so large a community in India, he lacked the requirement basic to all mass leadership—command of their language. While he spoke in Urdu, his thoughts were best expressed in English. His background was that of a westernized Oriental, whose talent was suited to debate in the Assemblies at Delhi but hardly qualified for the leadership of the masses. He donned the Persian cap and wore a *shirwani* for the Muslim League meetings. He never squatted on the floor, and his manner and his general mode of living were far from that of the average Indian. Unlike Gandhi who lived in a little hut in Sevagram and could sustain himself on a diet of goat's milk and dates, Jinnah stood aloof from the masses. His house, neither at Bombay nor at Lahore, was a symbol of the poverty which was Muslim India. He was more at home in his silk suit, his stiff starched collar, his briefs, the coterie of cultured, intelligent people such as you find in any cosmopolitan city in the world. While the mass appeal of a leader may be unimportant in any other country of the world, in India it was essential. And Jinnah lacked that essentiality.

Earlier in life he had made a name for himself in a handful of sensational criminal cases. He figured in the great Bawla case, which lasted for months. As a criminal lawyer he had ability, circumspection, and a polished manner of advocacy. In London, at the Round Table Conferences, he made himself impressive, not so much because of his case, but by the way he put it across. Gradually he became the embodiment of all that was

anti-Congress, for that is the most central characteristic of Jinnah. He was not so much the embodiment of Muslim culture and civilization, as he was an embodiment of all that was anti-Congress. When in 1939, he launched his campaign of Deliverance from the Congress, he crystallized what he stood for. It was obvious then that he was not positive in himself; he was a mere negation of the Congress. So that the appearance of Jinnah on the Indian scene in the role of a Muslim Deliverer was to be traced less to Muslim aspirations than to two exterior forces.

One, the desire of the British Government to build up Jinnah as a counteracting element to the growing supremacy of the Congress.

And Two, the inability and the complete incompetence of the Congress to anticipate the rise of Jinnah and its failure to kill Pakistan while still in its embryo form. While Jinnah often claimed for himself an almost inspired leadership resulting from the aspirations of his co-religionists, the fact remains that the idea of Pakistan did not really grow out of the Muslim masses, nor even the Muslim intelligentsia. It was rather thrust upon them by a shrewd, Muslim politician, who found that circumstances in politics gave him the opportunity to dominate the situation. Like Hitler's theories of race superiority and *Herrenvolk*, Pakistan became, from the obsession of a single man, the obsession of a whole people.

Jinnah had almost an open field in Muslim politics. The general standard of Muslim politicians was much inferior to that of the Congress. Only two other men in India might have competed with Jinnah. The one was Fazlul Huq, the one-time Premier of Bengal; the other was the late Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, then Premier of the Punjab. So long as Sikandar was alive, Jinnah had no chance of dominating the Punjab. Sikandar had that fine martial bearing and that high quality of a soldier-statesman which immediately appealed to the born fighting-men of that Northern province of India. With Sikandar's death, Jinnah found that even the Punjab would fall in line with

him, for his line was clear and there was no one of Sikandar's calibre to compete with him. Fazlul Huq in Bengal, though an abler man, lacked two things: One, consistency—he was always jumping on and off the fence ; two, an All-India appeal. Huq talked in terms of constitutional reform, speaking always as a Parliamentarian. Jinnah laid his stress on Islam, the common bond, the all-embracing faith. The Muslims understood Jinnah, for he spoke in a symbolism they understood. Huq was a little beyond them. Of the two, Jinnah was the better showman, and he gave the impression of being a man making a sacrifice for his people. Huq had neither the time nor the inclination, nor even the aptitude to give such an impression.

The rest of the talent which Jinnah encountered was very mediocre. He had a very able man in Nawab Liaquat Ali Khan, a shrewd, devoted and loyal follower of the Quaid-e-Azam, who was No. 2 in the Central organization of the League, but when it came to the provinces, his adjutants were really not much to speak of. They often appeared to have been chosen with an eye to support the League financially and thus to help to put into effect the various policies of the League. From the point of view of those Jinnah picked on, it was impressive to be called President or Vice-President or Secretary or Treasurer of the Provincial Muslim League Committees. It gave them a sense of importance, which their wealth alone did not give them. There were always exceptions, but the general impression was that talent was pathetically lacking in Muslim League organizations. When a matter concerning the Muslim League came into prominence, it was observed that the provincial Muslim Leaguers were reluctant to offer any comment on it, or even attempt to elucidate or explain it. This was not because of any Party discipline. It was a case of inability and of fear, lest by opening their mouths, they might put their foot right into it. Yet without this poverty of talent which surrounds Jinnah, he would never have found the support he sought for his theory of Pakistan, nor would this fanatic pan-Islamic fetish have grown from

a communal mania into a major problem of India. Credit must go to Jinnah for his shrewdness in exploiting the situation to its best advantage.

The part played by the British Government in building up Jinnah is fairly obvious. The Congress was growing from strength to strength and imperialist interests in Britain quite rightly feared that the more solid the Indian demand became, the more difficult it would be to resist it. Behind all the usual glib talk of being the guardians of the people and of having a trust to discharge, there was the important—vitally important—fact that India was a market for British goods and that it found employment for hundreds of thousands of Britishers not only in the administration of the country, but also in business and commerce.

But it was not only the British Government that made Jinnah's leadership possible. The Congress helped to a considerable extent. In the first place, the Congress did not countenance Jinnah at all. It ignored his claim of representing the Muslims. The general, early tone of Congressmen's opinion of Jinnah was that he was a bit of a crank and that to presume that anyone except the Congress could ever represent so large a section of India was absurd, because Congress represented all of it. To lead India was regarded by the Congress as a sort of private monopoly.

Jinnah had the patience to bide his time. He relied on two things: One, his ability to unite his community as a pan-Islamic unit, which must safeguard itself against the incursions of an overwhelming Hindu majority. Two, he relied on the Congress to prove that they could not carry on the fight for independence without active Muslim co-operation. On both points he judged rightly. In the early stages of his success, when his message was spreading over Muslim India, the Congress, like Nelson, looked for Jinnah's growing influence with its blind eye. Very little effort was made to treat his rise to power as anything more than a passing phase of Muslim politics. Hardly any

propaganda was done among the Muslim masses or the Muslim intelligentsia to counteract the effect of Jinnah's popularity. Instead, the Congress attitude was: Let's get freedom first; let's get the British to quit India and we can tackle our domestic problems afterwards. The weakness of this way of thinking was obscured in the general enthusiasm to see India free. But it told in the long run, till today the communal question stands directly in the way of our political advance. When, after the breakdown of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, the Mahatma attributed their failure to the presence of 'a Third Party', even the most ardent admirers of the Mahatma could not help feeling that the excuse was a trifle lame.

It was quite obvious to the great majority of thinking Indians why the talks failed. They were doomed to failure from the very beginning, for there was no possible nor reasonable line of agreement between two completely opposite and almost exclusive ideologies. The acceptance of the C. R. formula by the Mahatma, as the basis of negotiation, was only a concession to Jinnah's stubbornness, but the most important point of difference still remained, viz. Jinnah wanted separation first and was only interested in separation; the Mahatma hoped he could shelve the issue by binding Jinnah to accept the independence of India as the first item on a joint programme.

The idea of Pakistan as it emerged from the Gandhi-Jinnah meeting was impossible for acceptance in all its bearings. From the Muslim League's point of view there was no question of SOLVING the communal problem in terms of India as a whole. The gist of the Lahore resolution, on which Jinnah took his stand, was not settlement but separation. It was in terms of the Congress as uncompromising as the August resolution was in terms of Britain. Congress had said to Britain: "Quit India". The Muslim League said to the Congress: "Quit the territories where Muslims dominate." The territories for which Jinnah claimed separation were not to be canvassed as to their desire to secede. Where numerically the

Muslims were in a majority, the said territories were to be considered as *ipso facto* seceding.

So that the first point which emerged from those ill-omened talks was that the partition of India was to be accepted as a fact now, as the first condition of any further negotiation between the Congress and the League. The second point to emerge from the meeting was that Jinnah was not much concerned about the independence of India and its right to self-determination. Jinnah was not concerned about India in the present sense of the word. Once Pakistan was separated from Hindustan, each state would independently fight and negotiate for such terms as it wanted from the British Government. In other words, said Jinnah in effect: "I am only concerned with the fate of my NATION" Not Community, mark you. His Nation! Gandhi was free to do what he liked with his nation—the Hindus.

This 'two nations' theory came as a shattering blow to many thousands of national-minded Indians, who, while they were willing to make any sacrifice for the cause of freedom, were not willing to fight for freedom without unity. The one without the other was like taking away the substance and leaving only the form. Many of us had felt for a long time that Jinnah was not getting the attention he deserved and that he was being underrated as a potential danger to the Congress. The lack of foresight which the Congress showed and the coma of incompetence in which the rank and file of its khaddar-clad, Gandhi-capped, four-anna members lived made them refuse to see that Jinnah was wielding an unholy and dangerous influence over Muslim India, and that this influence was growing day by day. It was before his release from the Aga Khan's Palace that the Mahatma's eyes were opened by some of the more realistic of his followers to the state of affairs prevailing in the country today. It is said on reliable authority that the Mahatma made private inquiries on his own as to the extent of Jinnah's influence and the strength of his leadership in Muslim India. The report

he received from a well-informed Congressman in the Punjab was startling, for it indicated that if a general election was held in India today, Jinnah would sweep the polls in the Punjab. The absence of the late Sikandar Hyat Khan's counteracting influence was only now beginning to be felt.

It was then that the truth first dawned on the Mahatma that if this state of affairs was allowed to continue, it would shatter the national work of nearly three decades and the Congress would lose its *raison d'être*, for it would not be able to speak for the 92,000,000 Muslims, and that would weaken the Congress case in the eyes of the World. And if this went on, the Hindu Mahasabha would next claim to speak for the Hindus. And what would then be left for the Congress?

At this time a new influence came to bear on the Mahatma. It was the influence of the ex-Premier of Madras, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari. Berlin radio said when he was arrested that even the Indian Princes were in revolt against the British in India, because it believed he was the Raja of Gopalachari. But to return from the digression, Rajagopalachari is by far one of the most realistic men in the Congress today. He has been given a raw deal recently by the orthodox Congress, who dislike him, perhaps because of the very reason that he was a street above most of them in his ability to grasp a problem and he had that intuition about forthcoming dangers, which the abundance of wishful thinking has clogged in so many others. Rajagopalachari drew up his formula, which included the Congress recognition of Pakistan. The Mahatma accepted it but shrewdly played the part of an individual, disclaiming any representative capacity, and tried to foist the formula upon Jinnah, without in any way committing the Congress. It was a very clever move, but Jinnah would not bite. He never once tripped. Instead Jinnah drove home the point that until the Mahatma had assumed some representative capacity, it was futile arguing with him. Jinnah went further. He aired his propaganda at the expense of the

Mahatma. Knowing that this meeting would have a world-audience, Jinnah said that the Congress could only be a Hindu body talking in terms of Hindu freedom; that the Muslims were a nation entire in themselves; that the sooner the Mahatma and the Congress disillusioned themselves about their hold over India as a whole, the better for all concerned. That was Jinnah's theme. He never once strayed from it; he never once hit off the mark.

From the mass of published correspondence which embodied what took place at the Gandhi-Jinnah meeting, the following extract from Jinnah's letter to the Mahatma (dated September 17, 1944) sums up Jinnah's thrust on the question of representation.

Jinnah said: "I understand that you have made clear to me that you represent nobody but yourself, and I am trying to convince you that this (*sense unclear*) is the road which will lead us all to the achievement of freedom and independence, not only for the two major nations, Hindus and Muslims, but of the rest of the peoples of India, but when you proceed to say that you aspire to represent all the inhabitants of India, I regret I cannot accept that statement of yours. It is quite clear that you represent nobody else but the Hindus, and as long as you do not realize your true position and the realities, it is very difficult for me to argue with you, and it becomes still more difficult for me to persuade you, and hope to convert you to the realities and the actual living conditions prevailing in India today."

That was a direct blow. It was a challenge. So weak and insufficient had been the Congress policy and propaganda on this point that the Mahatma was able to make no reply to Jinnah other than that there was no harm in "aspiring" to it.

All these are details, but in substance what happened as a result of the breakdown of the Gandhi-Jinnah meetings? It is not our business to apportion blame. What concerns us are the direct results. In the main they were these:

One: Britain could sit back without worrying any more about the problem in India. "Quit India" was virtually dead, for two of the champions of India's cause had differed and fallen apart, giving Britain a fresh lease in India for God knows how many years.

Two: The Hindu-Muslim problem, the alleged lack of agreement between the two major communities, was claimed as the main reason for withholding self-government from India. That which was a bogey had now become a fact. With India on trial, Gandhi and Jinnah had produced Exhibit "A" for a fumbling Imperialist prosecutor.

Three: Our case in the outside world was damaged. There was no need for Britain to do any more propaganda in the United States where the Indian cause had been gradually gaining ground. Instead, the mere publication of the Gaudhi-Jinnah correspondence in America would do more for Britain in America than all the expensive machinery of propaganda which Britain had built there and maintained. There must have been a sight of relief when the correspondence came to the Department of Propaganda.

From our point of view, whether Gandhi or Jinnah won that battle of correspondence, it is the country that has lost and the country that will have to suffer. Only one constructive thought came from this morass of disagreement. It was when Jinnah said and Gandhi repeated: "If we part without coming to an agreement, we shall proclaim bankruptcy of wisdom on our side." It made every thinking Indian wonder whether it was not time to revise the question of leadership, when the leaders themselves proclaimed bankruptcy of wisdom on their side.

Bankruptcy of wisdom is now becoming almost a general complaint in India. As everywhere else in the world, leadership is directly related to the individuals, who by force of circumstances find themselves in a position to lead. Because of the rigid formulas that bind a man who aspires to the membership of the Congress and the

absurd restrictions which that membership entails, some of the more able men in India are content to remain outside the party, even though they believe in the broad principles for which the Congress stands. Many men cannot make the sacrifice demanded of them, should they desire to play their part in the struggle from within the Congress. Many are too conscientious to use the Congress as a stepping-stone to gain. Sooner or later the Congress will have to revise its scale and realize that the ceiling pay of Rs. 500 is far too absurd to be taken seriously by anyone.

We are supposed to achieve our goal of freedom by non-violent revolution. To Gandhi the credit must go for having made this country more keenly aware than ever before of the call to be free. But is even the most keen awareness enough without the requisite building up of an organization which is ready to take over power when the time for the transfer of power comes?

In his introduction to Karl Marx's *Capital* ("Das Kapital"), L. R. Ardnihcas explains most beautifully the Marxian theory of revolution. He elucidates a point which Marx made and which is as applicable to our non-violent revolution as it was to its violent Russian counterpart. Ardnihcas says:

"In the usual jargon of politics, it (revolution) means a forcible seizure of power in a certain country by an armed band—that is to say, *a coup d'état*. The Marxian revolution, however, denotes the process of change from one social system to another, or, in other words, the transfer of political power from one class to another. This transition may come in a thoroughly peaceful manner just as much as it may by violent means. The phenomena that accompany this process of transition are dependent upon many circumstances.... But the *sine qua non* of a successful revolution is that the class out to seize power must be conscious and it must be *ready*."

Mark the last words carefully. "....The class out to seize power must be conscious and must be READY."

There is a dual requirement—that of awareness and that of readiness.

Non-violent, *satyagraha* movements have undoubtedly made the people aware. There is no question of that. India has, as a result of them, acquired a national consciousness, which has been regarded as one of the major events of our times. But the Congress mistake has been to presume that with this awareness, a readiness to take over power can come as a matter of course. The trend of national thought, as contained in Congress teachings, is that for us, freedom comes first and we don't care a damn what follows. This also is part of the bankruptcy of wisdom.

The tragedy of this way of thinking is most marked in the case of the younger generation, in whose mind this thought has taken root. We have seen our young men and women from the schools and colleges of India, neglecting their studies to participate in the political fermentations of the Congress, believing as they have been allowed to believe, that to take part in a heated political meeting is a form of *dharm seva*. In the excitement of living in the hectic days of the struggle, they forget to lay for themselves the solid foundation which comes from studentship. The Congress has placidly acquiesced in this attitude of young India. It has taken no active part hitherto to mould student opinion on any constructive basis. Only recently has there been a move to start a strong, pro-Congress student movement—a move which appears to be due to the influence of communists whose influence the orthodox Congress has begun to fear. But all these years it was the student body that swelled the cheering mob instead of swelling the classrooms by attendance. The result has been that a whole generation finds itself without this essential background, without which no fight for freedom can succeed and without which, no people can be ready to shoulder the burden of self-determination.

This constructive side of Congress activity has been shockingly neglected. It is not absent from C-

policy. It is only wanting in Congress practice. Everyone seems too anxious to take the curtain call without putting in that spade-work of solid rehearsals. This is why we as a people and the Congress as a party are aware but not ready for the revolution which is in the mind of every freedom-loving Indian.

Perhaps the most shocking spectacle of all is the exploiting of Congress ideals for purposes different from what the Congress itself intended. While the view is held that this is not our war—a view which is understandable, even as that of a conscientious objector—these same people, pious to the nth degree, allegedly Congress-minded, often khaddar-clad and Gandhi-capped, appear to have no political scruples about availing themselves of the opportunity for gain which is provided directly as a result of the war. A number of Congressmen, who bask in the shadow of the Mahatma, are running some of the largest war orders in the country. And these are the same people who tell the small man: "This is not our war. Stay out of it." What becomes of the principle? The House of Birla, whether it likes it or not, is in fact executing Government orders to the tune of crores of rupees—orders which directly help the war effort and which as directly give that firm of industrialists gains on an enormous scale. Yet the Mahatma gives the house of Birla his benediction by staying in it during his visits to Bombay. Well may it be asked by the man in the street: "Isn't there some discrepancy in this whole affair?"

Yet more disillusioning than all this was the realization that the will to resist was hardly as powerful as it had been in the earlier days. What was once a fire has now become only an ember. We have become soft and our struggle has in phases become almost childish. There was too much "symbolism" and too little real action. Gone were the days when in India a man had bared his chest and said to the military squad that threatened with pointed rifles: "Go on, fire!" Today the tempo was different. It was more like the traditional conception of playing

cricket. We sent personal letters to the District Commissioner telling him of the time and place of the intended *satyagraha*. The letter might almost have read: "Please send a car to meet me on my arrest." Then we complained in the nationalist press when a *satyagrahi* did not get the class of treatment to which he was entitled. It was as if at a Government House Party the rules of precedence had been violated by a new and inexperienced A.D.C. who had given the wife of a Baronet a seat below the wife of a mere Knight.

Non-violence, great as it had been when expounded by the Mahatma, had in effect evolved into a sort of vegetarianism in politics. It had emaciated the national movement. The fault lay not with the man who first enunciated the principle but with the mediocre followers of his who were not able to stand up to the standard of sacrifice which Gandhi's non-violence demanded.

That is the reality which faces every Indian and the trouble is that we are reluctant to admit it even to ourselves.

## V

## SOME PEOPLE

IT IS NOT RIGHT TO REGARD INDIA AS BEING MADE UP OF Gandhi and Jinnah. There are many others from among the 400,000,000 who go to make up this country of ours. While from the Congress Gandhi stands out as the all-important figure, it is Jawaharlal Nehru who fires the imagination of people abroad. Jawahar plays a Stalin to Gandhi's more idealistic Lenin. Gandhi has his charka, his large spectacles, his toothless smile, his goat's milk and his ration of dates. He is as near a symbol of emaciated India as any one single man could be. Jawahar is rather the aristocrat, slumming amidst the masses, but

still having his roots in Harrow and Cambridge and 'all the rich philosophy of the West. He boasts of no intuition; no inner voice urges him on. His conduct is based on logic, his principles are founded on reason. His mind cannot work except in terms of regular sequences. He is a realist, constantly aware of people around him and events that happen in the world. He is human enough constantly to be confused by conflicting loyalties. In the hectic days of 1942, which preceded the August Resolution, one could picture Jawahar impatiently walking up and down his room, wondering which was the right thing to do. He would feel first the loyalty which an intellectual of his calibre must cherish for humanity at large, for those men of Russia, China and all the countries of Europe who came within the sphere of total war, and the urge to respond to the pleading of Madame Chiang and the Generalissimo whom he had met only a few months before the Resolution. And then, next morning, he would hear the reasoning of the Mahatma—the one man who still dominated Jawahar's reason by sheer emotion. When Jawahar said later that he was convinced, those of us who had watched him through the years felt sure that the heart had dominated the head.

No one has really understood Jawaharlal Nehru. Fewer still know him. It is said, though not disrespectfully, that Jawahar does not know himself. Though an individualist to the tips of his fingers, he somehow loses all his individuality under the spell and shadow of Mahatma Gandhi. He suffers from a father-complex towards Gandhi. Most people find it difficult to revolt against their father, yet Jawahar, so far as politics were concerned, not only did so, but dominated and led his father. Gandhi has taken the place which Motilal should normally have occupied.

But this obedience to Gandhi does not, I think, leave Jawahar entirely pleased with himself. If I may drive home a serious point by a bit of frivolity, his state reminds me of one of my own, when once returning to London after a very beautiful week-end in Paris. I dined that

night in the grill room of the Mayfair and must have appeared a trifle sad to the *maître d'hôtel* who kindly enquired about my blue feeling.

"Leon," I said, "she was Spanish and very beautiful." Leon understood. He made the right sort of sympathetic gestures with his hands. He too was a man of the world, he seemed to imply.

"Do you know any Spanish, Leon?"

Leon knew eight languages and Spanish was one of them. He seemed to understand even the unspoken language of the heart, for he promptly brought me a telegraph form with something written on it and said "Just fill in the name and address."

"Do you mind telling me what I am saying to her?" I asked partly out of youthful curiosity and partly also out of caution.

In his accented, almost perfumed English he translated the words of the telegram. "Though my body is here, my heart is still with you."

Jawahar always seems to be saying this to that finer, richer living and thinking which he has known, even though one saw him hot and perspiring at a Congress rally or addressing the masses in some obscure village of India. At least he knows for certain that though he is for the masses he is not of them.

I have watched him closely in some of his unguarded moments. I have watched him come back from a swim on Juhu beach and relax on a deck chair in the shack of J. R. D. Tata. I have watched him at lunch, far away from the masses. I have called on him on a peaceful afternoon at his sister's house at Lucknow. He has always struck me as being courteous, extremely polished, cultured, appreciative of the finer values of life. He has a sense of humour which is quick and subtle, but the years of struggle have left no smile on his face. He seems to want to get somewhere in a great hurry, though no one, perhaps not even he, knows where exactly he wants to go. While

the freedom of India is obviously one of Jawahar's goals, it is certainly not the limit of his ambition. He seems to want more than that and shows the bitterness of disillusionment in the way he looks blankly at you and through you—far beyond the world of little men. I often feel that with all the hardships of his present life, his character has been moulded more within prison walls than in the committees and the conferences of politicians which he attends when he is free. Away from the outside world he spends his time in solid reading. He keeps pace with the times. He wishes to live in that greater world which belongs not to the men of one country but to all men. If he is a dreamer, it is because he is also a romanticist. He is a misfit in the Congress entourage, for the Congress, I feel, hardly gives him the scope to rise to the full stature of his ability. But born an Indian in the hour of his country's greatest struggle, though nurtured in the best schools of political and philosophical thought, sensitive as all intellectual men must be, emotional, impatient, there seemed no other role for him in the India of our generation. Perhaps the words of Blake's *Jerusalem*, slightly altered, would best describe his attitude.

Bring me my bow of burning gold !

Bring me my arrows of desire !

Bring me my spear ! O clouds, unfold !

Bring me my chariot of fire !

I will not cease from mental fight,

Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have lit again the light

That shone in this benighted land.

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Though dead, Tagore for me is still very much alive. He died in August 1941, but for many young Indians of my generation he had only just begun to have some meaning. I remember him as early as when I was nine.

THE SOUL OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE 81

I was taken by my grandfather in our old Sunbeam car for a drive to Cuffe Parade. Tagore came to speak to him that evening, and I can still remember the flowing beard, the cultured voice, the long white hair, the deep-set eyes, looking beyond the horizon, and the flowing robes to match a poet's personality. In every gesture I have seen that unassailable quality—dignity. Nothing I have seen in flesh and blood could have been more impressive. He moved as if each movement of his was a line of poetry. His gait, his stance, his upright carriage for down-trodden and poor cadence of his prose. He walked with his head held high, believing in the future of his struggle for freedom, believing in the country—believing in its struggle engendered. He also in the sacrifice which that struggle "blue blood" of stood out high above other men with the "blue blood" of the intellect and of the spirit. He returned his knighthood nced as tokens of recognition. He returned the victims of Amritsar. All because his heart bled for the great heritage of his people whom he hoped to liberate. The world—the greater world of free people—acknowledged his name stood for all that was earned the Nobel prize, for his name stood for all that was magnificent in life and literature.

In him was enshrined the soul of the Indian. An artist with an eye for exquisite beauty, in age but of all time, a patriot with a passion for his country, the whole story of India in his life.

In him was enshrined the soul of the Indian people. An artist with an eye for exquisite beauty, a poet not of an age but of all time, a patriot who burned with a flaming passion for his country, a man in whose eyes was reflected the whole story of suffering humanity, Tagore was undoubtedly one of the most adorable men of our time. To have lived in an age and in a country to which he belonged is to have drunk of the fountain of love and to have worshipped at the altar of God. To have seen him was an inspiration, to have read him or heard him speak was an experience one could never forget.

He wrote so much that was beautiful, perhaps the most beautiful among his words was his bitter retort to a woman who had attacked

He wrote so much that was beautiful, yet to me perhaps the most beautiful among his written or spoken words was his bitter retort to Miss Rathbone, the Englishwoman who had attacked the Indian Nationalist attitude. He wrote so much that was beautiful, yet to me perhaps the most beautiful among his written or spoken words was his bitter retort to Miss Rathbone, the Englishwoman who had attacked the Indian Nationalist attitude.

to the war. It was his last public utterance on behalf of his country and his people. That he should have got up from his death-bed to speak that beautiful prose for those who were unable to speak, made that utterance a memorable and historic one. The words should be engraved on every stone erected to his memory and on every Indian heart which mourned for his death.

"I look around and see famished bodies crying for bread. I have seen women in villages dig up mud for a few drops of drinking water, for wells are even more scarce in Indian villages than schools. I know that the population of England itself is today in danger of starvation, and I sympathize with them, but when I see how the whole might of the British Navy is engaged in convoying food vessels to the English shores, and when I recollect that I have seen our people perish of hunger, and not even a cartload of rice brought to their door from the neighbouring district, I cannot help contrasting the British at home with the British in India..... A Government must be judged not by the pretensions of its spokesmen but by its actual and effective contribution to the well-being of the people."

Thus Tagore spoke his last words. Then, borne on his simple bier, he went his lonely way. For him there was peace and eternity. For us he left a fond memory and a great inspiration.

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To move from the dead to the living. The first time I saw him was many years ago, when he had not yet come to the helm of India's great industrial concern, the House of Tata. His name was Jehangir Tata. His friends called him "Jeh". Nowroji Saklatvala was then the Chairman of Tatas, and I had called to collect him at the end of his day's work. Nowroji looked into Jeh's room and took me in with him. My first impression of Jeh was that he was a hard worker, one of the very few sons of the rich who was

not a playboy. More than any other person of his generation—he is now on that frontier of youth which bounds on middle age—Jeh believes in keeping fit both in mind and body. In the morning before office I have seen him in his well-furnished, though not extravagant, bungalow, doing his half hour of physical exercise, lifting weights, breathing deeply, making waving semaphores in the air with a pair of dumb-bells. Washed, shaved, he leaves for his office at an early hour. In the car on the way he looks at his files which he carries in his little black box which follows him everywhere. It's like the despatch case of a diplomat—he is this difference that Jeh could never be a diplomat—he is too straight-cut and too honest with himself to allow of any adjustments for diplomacy. He dislikes formal parties, racing and stiff shirts. Spending a week-end at Government House he had the nerve to wear a soft shirt—an unpardonable offence in the India before the War. But Jeh is like that. Many years ago, motoring back from Darjeeling, his car was stopped by the Police and held up on the side of the road for over an hour in the bitterest Himalayan cold. The reason given for the holding up of traffic was that the Governor of Bengal was to pass along the same road returning from his summer resort to his seat in Calcutta. The road had, therefore, to be kept clear for "Ladsab" which is the equivalent of "His Lordship" in the Indian policeman's vocabulary. When eventually the Governor did arrive, where Jeh was made to halt, his wife, who was with him, stood in the middle of the road. Jeh went stopped the car. It was Jeh's idea. It was typical of the fire and the silent rebellion within him. The car stopped, seeing an Indian lady in the middle of the road. Jeh went up to it and gave the Governor a piece of his mind, but the representative of the Raj was too stunned to utter a word. Silently he drove away but Jeh had had his say and a Christian padre, who was similarly halted, echoed his feelings, saying: "And that goes for me too."

Jeh is a live force in India today. His genius is best suited to the job in which he finds himself—that of the head

of an industrial brain trust, a man who sits at the switch board of a great organization, controlling every nerve of it and using his influence to see that the best, and only the best, use is made of that vast energy which is embodied in the name, Tata. Jeh has a spark of that same vision which kindled in that great man who founded the House of Tata. Like Jamshedji, Jeh sees ahead, thinking not only in terms of today but far ahead into the future—the India of many years from now. Already he has put his name to a ten thousand crore plan for the industrial development of the country, and there is an assurance that should it be demanded in the interests of the country, the House of Tata would be willing to acquiesce in the nationalization of big industry and that it would fall in line with any scheme which may further the welfare of the people, even though such a step would imply the curtailment of individual profit. In many things which have been done in the name of the House of Tata the hand of Jeh can clearly be seen. He is at heart a genuine nationalist. He has brought to bear, on what was otherwise only an industrial concern, the healthy and broad outlook of industry working for a purpose. In his own modest way he has often said that he is not brilliant in himself. Were we to accept that valuation, it would still be necessary to add that he is at least the cause of brilliance in others. In whatever he does he bears the hall-mark of the perfect Indian of today.

Though he does not don *khaddar*, nor flaunt a Gandhi cap, he is a great believer in the Mahatma. Recently, on the eve of the Gandhi-Jinnah meeting, when I told Jeh that nothing would result from it in the shape of an agreement, he was still inclined to hold the more optimistic view. He said: "The old man has an uncanny way about him". Jeh's faith in the Mahatma was not misplaced, but his appreciation of Jinnah was undoubtedly a little out of focus.

His office room is on the newly-built top-floor of Bombay House. In it hangs the picture of his father

and a couple of Langhammer pictures of the Tata Steel works at Jamshedpur. His desk is tidy. There are a few odd books in a cupboard in the wall. A photograph of his wife, Thelma, faces him on the table across the way. The room is air-conditioned. One might almost believe it was a day on the Swiss Alps, were it not for the view from the window through which one could see a tired coolie underneath, digging into his toes, or a Central Bank peón blowing his nose on the other side of the street.

Before he settled down to the Chairmanship of the House of Tata, Jeh was a keen flyer. In his early days he used to fly much more than he does now. He was the first to fly solo from Karachi to Croydon.

There is a story told by one of the reporters of the *Bombay Chronicle* which illustrates the man. In 1937, the Tata Air Lines had their inaugural flight to Delhi, and two pressmen—one from our office—were invited. In his enthusiasm to get very detailed information about everything, one of the reporters said to the pilot: "Excuse my asking you, but what salary do you get?"

The pilot felt uncomfortable and hesitated.

The pressman continued: "Don't tell me if you feel awkward about it."

The pilot fondled his collar and replied:

"Well... I get about three thousand five hundred."

The pressman swooned and it was not because of the altitude. In awe he repeated: "Three thousand five hundred rupees!" The pilot explained, "Well, I am not exactly a pilot... You see I am the Chairman of the Air Lines Company."

Needless to say the pilot was J. R. D. Tata.

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Let's take a woman for a change, for there are a great many women in India who resent being pushed aside when

something is being said in terms of India. This woman, however, is not just a woman. She is an institution. She is the All-India Women's Conference rolled into one. She is as much of the women's body-politic as liver extract is of the liver. She likes to think she is now growing into an old lady, but except for her years, even quite young people who know her well still regard her as one of them. For the young she is a sort of legend ; for the older generation she is a bit of a rebel. She is quite simple really and provides a relief to the melodrama of high politics. Her distinctive marks are her strong nasal sniff and her perpetual clearing of the throat. She is a speaker too of varied ability. She has been known to make some of the most moving and impassioned speeches to the most critical of audiences and sweep them off their feet. But it is difficult always to maintain the standard of high theatre, and her manner, which is that of a Lilian Braithwaite reciting Shakespearean tragedy, is sometimes a little out of place in the more prosaic, bovine and apathetic audiences of India.

She has strong likes and dislikes, and voices her opinions, without fear or favour, of the men within the Congress and its High Command, regarding it a woman's privilege to be outspoken in her opinions of men. She looks upon Jawahar with almost fond maternal patronage and begins her sentences about him : "Well, you know what Jawahar is like..." She is very conscious of Jawahar's inability to make up his mind on conflicting issues quickly. She sees clearly the gulf there is between his instinct and the colder and more rigid dogmatism of the party. She is fond of Jawahar as a mother is fond of her youngest son, but then she is fond of everybody whom she does not particularly dislike. She hates insincerity and knows where it exists in the Congress. She regards Congress meetings as large Campuses for co-eds and as being equally naïve. But they are, she feels, necessary, and part of the progress and education of the people.

Perhaps I might mention her name, which is Sarojini

## THE NIGHTINGALE

87

Naidu, though for an Indian this would not be necessary. She is also known as 'The Nightingale', which is because of the occasional verse she writes. She is very ornate in her manner of expression, a typical oriental, schooled in the baroque style, so typical of oriental art, architecture and literature, intermingled with an occasional dash of incense, the smell of Mogra flowers, minarets and jingle bells. It is difficult really to reproduce the tone and texture of her poetry. I once said it resembled a Mahomedan gala dress on Id day.

In comparison with Indian women—specially those dabbling in politics—Mrs. Naidu retains, even at her mature age, an amazing sense of humour. She tells two stories of herself, one at her own expense. At a College in Lahore, which she addressed and where she was supposed to give youth a message which would fire their imagination, she was introduced by the President of the College Students' Society. The young man, very conscious of the high honour done to the College by Mrs. Naidu, began his introductory remarks by saying how great a privilege it was to have amongst them "India's greatest and *most public* woman."

The other story is of an incident which happened at Madras, to which all great stories of our time must necessarily belong, if only because it is in the South that enthusiasm, like hope, springs eternal in the human breast. The train in which Mrs. Naidu was leaving was about to move from the platform. The crowd of friends and Congress admirers had wished her good-bye. The door of the compartment was properly closed and Mrs. Naidu was looking graciously out of the carriage window. Suddenly, breaking through the motley crowd, a young Madrassi came towards her. He was out of breath, partly because he had run and partly owing to his hero-worship of the great lady. The engine's whistle blew and the young man knew that there was little time left for him to obtain her *darshan*. "Excuse please, but are you Mrs. Naidu?" Mrs. Naidu replied in the affirmative. As the train began to move

he caught her hand and with a gleam in his eye, he said, running along the platform; "It is a high honour and privilege to have met you, which I was simply longing all my life." He ran further, took a deep breath, and concluded: "I have read all your biology!"

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My next is an austere man. His physique accentuates his austerity. A rather large head, emaciated features, slight of build, very dark in complexion, he wears powerful black glasses which hide the colour of his eyes. When speaking, he has a peculiar manner of slanting his head. It gives him that poise in his speech and allows him time to emphasise his point. He uses his hands but little and when he does, they usually help to convey his thoughts. Anatomically, an analysis would show that the most developed part of his body is his head.

Through his high-powered glasses C.R. (which stands for the cumbrous Madrassi name of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari), ex-Premier of Madras, surveys India in a more realistic way than any other Congress politician. He has a clear mind, an uncanny ability to grasp the situation and to understand the finer points of a problem. His mind moves from premise to premise. His approach to life is analytical, systematic and positive. He is sure of what he says, always well-armed with facts and figures, never badly informed, never vague or hesitating in his arguments. He produces arguments as if he were a slot machine and you had only to press a button to make it work.

C. R. stands for that which is practicable in Indian politics. Without in any way diminishing the Indian demand, he is inclined to allow more constant emphasis on practicability. Perhaps earlier than any other Congress member, he foresaw the need for arriving at an understanding with Jinnah. He knew how difficult such an agreement would be; even so he realized it was the *sine qua non* of any political advance in India. C. R. resigned from the

Congress Working Committee as he differed from its policy on several points. Among other things, his attempts to resolve the communal impasse by his conversations with Jinnah resulted in his leaving the Congress High Command, which had shown signs of intolerance for any one who drifted from party policy.

As a speaker Rajagopalachari does not come within the class of orators. There is no flamboyance or verbosity in his utterances. His similes are few but to the point. He is easy to understand, simple to follow. He speaks down to the smallest brain in his audiences, so that no one feels left out. Unlike Churchill or Lloyd George, he does not pause for effect. He seldom pauses at all, and when he finds he has nothing more to say he sits down. There are no perorations in Rajagopalachari's speech—no purple patches, no passages one wants to memorize. Sometimes he is unbearably prosaic, but he never misses making his point on any occasion.

Rajagopalachari has no counterpart in the galaxy of English speakers. Churchill and Lloyd George score over him in the matter of effect. George Lansbury and his type show far more emotion. Rajagopalachari belongs rather to the Parliamentary class as represented by the Halifax-Duff-Cooper school, but even these English statesmen may occasionally indulge in a flashy epigram. C. R. never does. He is content to stick to the simplest ways of expression, and avoids anything that may be too subtle or sophisticated to understand. He never forgets the limitations of his audience.

I first heard Rajagopalachari speak at that hectic Tripuri Congress, at which Subhas Bose, burning with a temperature of 102°, complete with ice bag on head and fanning dames, presided. I then became aware of his persuasiveness and of his power to turn the scales in a debate. There is no doubt in my mind that Subhas Bose's downfall came sooner because of Rajagopalachari's Tripuri speech. Though courteous in the extreme, C. R. did not

stoop to cover up his attack with honeyed words. He spoke straight to the point like one who was unafraid.

The official Congress and various members of the orthodox element in the High Command do not appear to take well to him. For some obscure reason I have heard his motives doubted, his sincerity questioned and his utterances, which are brilliantly lucid, have been taken with a pinch of salt. But C. R. is shrewd enough to realize that in India one must be prepared in politics to be thick-skinned. Public opinion in this country, if public opinion there is in any organized form, is easy to manipulate, and because he is a man with brains of a high order, there are many who are jealous of him. The fact, however, remains that Rajagopalachari played a very important part in bringing home to Gandhi and the Congress, the urgent need of opening negotiations, however unfruitful, with the President of the Muslim League.

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To ignore Vallabhbhai Patel, commonly known as the Sardar, would be to look at India with a blind eye. In this man, who is the party boss of the Congress, is concentrated the essence of bitterness. He resembles more closely than anyone else the American idea of the party boss. He possesses unquestionable ability for organization and the courage to be ruthless in the achievement of his aims and ambitions. It is difficult to say for what Vallabhbhai Patel stands, for he seldom strikes for a positive constructive end. He is at his best in destruction—the ideal person to undermine anything by organization of sheer resistance.

As a speaker he prefers to speak in Gujerati. It is the language of the region of his influence. He is at his best when declaiming against any policy or any institution. He is forceful and succeeds in making a point, but generally with a certain amount of coarseness. He does not impress one as being a scholar like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. He is not an aristocrat with a background and high pedigree like

Nehru's. He is merely efficient but his efficiency and ability to organize are indispensable in putting into effect that part of the Congress programme which consists of Civil Disobedience.

Shrewd, quick in planning, Vallabhbhai works upon his followers more like the medicine itself than the doctor who prescribes it. He can quicken the pulse of the nation. He can act as an astringent to shake the apathy of a-sleeping people. He knows where his strength lies and knows also how to manœuvre a situation to that point of view which he supports. His speech on the August Resolution at the Congress Rally in Bombay was typical of the man. The milk of human kindness would turn sour in Vallabhbhai's mouth. The years within the party have made him so bitter that there is no grace left in him and his way of thinking is ruthless beyond belief. He is not loved so much as he is feared. In a free and peaceful India—if such an India can ever come to be—there would be no place for Vallabhbhai Patel, even as there is no use for dynamite unless there is something to be blown up.

So long as Gandhi dominates the Indian political scene, Vallabhbhai will always remain in check. But the day the Mahatma is removed, whoever differs or breaks with Vallabhbhai Patel will do so at his own risk and cost.

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It seems strange to think that it was an English girl who said to me when I was returning to India: "Do you know that man Elwin?" I didn't. I had not even heard of him. She was surprised. "You must make it a point of meeting him. He is quite a character."

I enquired who he was and from little scraps of information I received later, my picture of Verrier Elwin was somewhat as follows:—

A Padre, a missionary; wanting to convert people; aged about 60; the sort of person who had stayed out in

India so long that one just got used to him; a sort of Sir Alexander Gray in a clergyman's gown with a touch of Foss in the Metropolitan of India. I know Verrier well enough now to tell him this. I regard him as one of the most fascinating persons I have ever met. In any case he has sufficient sense of humour, for he once described himself as "a child—a monster child almost—Mahatma Gandhi and Sir Samuel Hoare."

Once in a while he comes to Bombay from his Gond or Baiga hideout to pay a fleeting visit to Bombay. I think he regards it as a sort of interval—or interlude—from his work.

I have never been able to have a serious talk with Elwin. I have seldom been able to discuss anthropology with him, chiefly because till a few years ago I did not quite know what anthropology was. Now I have got some rough idea. To put it simply, it deals with a lot of backward people, who are only backward because they are not forward. They are the sort of people who would not, for instance, dare to do the Conga at the Cricket Club. More the type who, in the style of Bateman, ask for a glass of milk in the Café de Paris. One day over lunch I did get Elwin to tell me something about what was happening in *his home* in the wilderness of Chota Nagpur. Of course, the most important item of conversation that day was his son, born in October 1941, whom he has named Jawahar.

"What does he look like?" I asked Elwin.

"A little bit like Churchill, so everyone says," he replied, adding, "rather odd that one should say that Jawaharlal looks like Churchill."

Jawahar Elwin is a remarkable child. He is an experiment which might help to shake the destiny of the world—the answer to Kipling who said:—"East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet!" Jawahar is to be brought up as an Indian. The young Jawahar is to grow up without any religious, communal or theological bias; if he wanted a religion later on in life he will be free

to choose. As to being a Christian, Verrier believes that it is not what we call ourselves that matters, but what we are worthy to be called.

"What have you planned for him?"

"It is difficult to plan ahead in a world like this. It depends so much on what happens to the world after the War."

Elwin has written a number of books. In one of them, he speaks of the Gotu which is a sort of Co-ed Club, where the unmarried gather, because it is regarded as immoral for an unmarried girl to live in the same house as her married parents. So she goes to the Gotu, this to avoid pregnancy and to eliminate jealousy. Out of two thousand cases he examined, Verrier Elwin found only twenty-seven became pregnant.

When a boy or girl has been some six years in the Gotu, he or she gets married. Marriages are always arranged. Romance and love do not enter into it. The parents arrange the match with a boy or a girl from a neighbouring village, who has likewise been in a Gotu. Marriage with a virgin is regarded as unsound and likely to fail because of the girl's or man's inexperience. Elwin found that out of two thousand test cases only forty odd arranged matches, on the contrary, are successful. Elwin had failed. Divorce is easy, too easy. The whole outlook on marriage of the aborigines, was, according to Elwin, practical and healthy. Elwin is in many ways under the most interesting results of the impact of the West and the East. A typical Oxford don, he began life under the influence of the Church, which he relinquished to practise and preach the greater Christianity, which had no trimmings and trappings, no ceremonial and prejudice, no chains to restrain freedom. He has been arrested in India though not jailed. He is in many ways more Indian than many Indians. He is more than just an orientalized western gentleman.

Elwin has got India under his skin and in his blood. It is a strange grafting of one civilization on to another.

Many people regard Verrier Elwin only as an anthropologist. They look upon him as a sort of bookworm scholar, a research student, but he is more human and more interesting than that. In spite of the secluded life he leads, he still retains that appreciation of good things without which the world would be too drab, too cold, too damned uninteresting. His conversation is varied and his interests are equally so. He has a versatile mind capable of turning to any subject. His background is still that of Oxford with its dreamy spires and the river and that Gothic environment which belonged to his early days. Without that liberal and humane and mature influence I doubt very much if he could have got so near the Gonds as to be called by them, as he is called, "Burra bhai" (Big brother). And that means so much in this country.

There are only three faults in Elwin:—

- (i) He has no commercial sense;
- (ii) He is far too modest about his achievements;
- (iii) He has too much patience with people far below his intellect.

He told me once the story of a lady, who had come up to him at a Cocktail party and said: "Tell me, Mr. Elwin, is anthropology very prevalent in your district?"

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Lionel Fielden, that most Indian of Englishmen, produced in 1941 for the *New Statesman & Nation* a delightfully caustic article on the Viceroy's Expanded Executive Council. In this he gave some attractive thumb-nail sketches of some of the men who went to make up that high Council of India for the Viceroy. They show up so beautifully the unrepresentative character of these members, so far as national interests were concerned, that I cannot withstand the temptation to quote them.

Of Sir H. P. Mody, Fielden writes: "Sir Homi is one of the most engaging characters I have ever met; one of the wittiest, as well as the most acute business men of India: He is a Parsee—and therefore, except in purely financial terms quite unrepresentative of India. Much as I like him, I find it funny even to suppose that Sir Homi, palatially ensconced at Bombay, has or could have any connection or sympathy with the common people of India."

Lionel next dealt with the late Sir Akbar Hydari, that Grand Old Man of India of the Native States, for many years Prime Minister of His Exalted Highness the Nizam's Dominion. Though the Sir Akbar referred to by Fielden is dead, the sketch is too pretty to be left out. Moreover, it is a typical picture of the India which the late Sir Akbar represented. Of him Mr. Fielden says: "I could scarcely say a word against Sir Akbar Hydari since he has entertained me—alone—to dinner in his exquisite garden at Hyderabad, with—mark you—thirty-four illuminated fountains playing round us, fascinating conversation, and a round of his picture collection afterwards. He flies about in his own plane, and boxes, so I am told, every morning; all of which, in a man of his age, is striking. (Sir Akbar was about 70 when Fielden wrote this). He is immensely likable; he may represent the Moghuls (since, as part of a Muslim oligarchy he ruled a Hindu State) but do not tell me that he represents India."

Fielden next speaks of Raghavendra Rao and Firoz Khan Noon, who had then become members of Civil Defence and Labour respectively. Of the first, Fielden said: "I would only assume that he would be conscientious and unimaginative; and personally, if I were living in Delhi when the Hun reached Lahore, I'd prefer someone more lively. Of the second I would like to say many mischievous but not kind things; his is a potentially great task as a member for Labour and here again I am up against an enormously likable personality whose acceptance of the post seems to me curiously cynical. I wish

him good luck; I wish he would visit Nehru in Dehra Dun jail."

Of Aney, Fielden said he was a dark horse, and of Sir Sultan Ahmed, then Member for Law and now in charge of Information and Broadcasting (or in simple language Propaganda) Fielden said: "Sir Sultan is a charming old gentleman exhumed once again for the British Raj, partly because he masks compliance with a most attractive and explosive display against bureaucracy, partly because the high Muslim ranks are thin."

Lord Linlithgow took in these members to give the impression to the world at large that his Council was mainly made up of Indians. The subtle way in which Fielden makes his hits, while giving a pat on their back, takes away all the gilt with which Linlithgow must have wished that they should shine.

## VI

### LOVE, SEX AND MORALS

AFTER POLITICS, SEX IS PERHAPS THE MOST PUZZLING problem of India with this difference that while the editor of a nationalist paper in India will often allow half a dozen articles to be written on Hindu-Muslim unity, he fights shy of any writing on sex, even dispassionately. There is in India a general reluctance to discuss sex impersonally. The average, educated Indian regards sex as purely physical. It has nothing to do with mind or feeling and still less with human emotion.

Broadly speaking, sex in India divides itself into two classes: that which is matrimonial and proper and that which is under the *punkah*. As marriage is often regarded as a formality akin to the advance booking of cinema seats, it is difficult to speak of marriage in terms of sex. Marriage, therefore, is nearer to good housekeeping than it is to

Freud. It is more dependent on and mixed up with in-laws than with the two people who have joined hands in holy wedlock. Often it is a purely economic adjustment of dowries, a re-establishment of remote family ties, a perpetuation of a dynasty. These are the more common manifestations and purposes of marriage in India.

In the advertising columns of the Indian press, there is a classification headed "Matrimonial". Here is reflected in no small measure the attitude of the middle and upper-middle class to the problem of marriage. The wanting of a wife or a husband is in no way different from the need of a stenographer, an agent, a clerk or an accountant. Samples of the advertisements which follow have all appeared within the space of two months. They are authentic adlets from an Indian paper.

Here is a family who wish to deal only in pairs:

"Matrimony invited for a bride and bridegroom from respectable Brahacharnam non-Srivatsagotram families for a sister and brother aged sixteen and twenty-six respectively. Only for bridegroom need not apply."

Here follows another general clearance sale:

"Wanted a Healthy, Handsome young Vaidya groom of character settled in life for a sweet, charming M. A. girl and also two really beautiful Vaidya girls with education, music and of amiable nature for two Healthy, Handsome young men (character A-1) well-settled in life—one in business and the other one in Government Service. No demand. Interested parties of East Bengal other than Sandilya gotra should immediately apply with photos and full particulars."

Here is a young man of 35, earning Rs. 15,000 (over £ 1,000) a month. The fact that he mentions no other detail about himself is an indication of his confidence that his money guarantees character and respectability.

"Wanted a suitable match from any caste for a high family Hindu gentleman of 35 years age, monthly income 15,000."

Here is another rich man's son whose parents have decided to get him settled. Note the emphasis on refinement.

"Parents of Up-country bachelor world-travelled brought up in France earning lacs from contracts-factory M. L. A.'s family desire most beautiful tall very fair refined girl from refined prominent modern family of Bombay. Beauty and culture considered."

Here is a man who wants to expand his business, it would appear:

"Sweet tempered, social Lady Doctor of any nationality for a young Muslim Doctor of Social status for matrimonial."

Here is a queer case of money in search of more:

"Wanted a match for a 16 year old U. P. Raja's daughter who is highly cultured and heiress of estate of Rs. 50,000 annually. Only modernised Rajputs with sound financial position need start negotiations."

Here is something from a man who must be accustomed to asking for tenders:

"Wanted a suitable social Hindu Virgin Widow mate of any caste between 25 to 30 years without encumbrances, slim, beautiful, well-educated, for a well-to-do South Indian Baniya to settle down at Bangalore. Preference will be given for medical beginners wishing to start business at Bangalore. Other educated people also can apply giving full particulars, enclosing snapshots or photographs."

As in passports, applications are requested in "own handwriting" in the following:

"A young energetic and healthy Muslim Bombay with monthly income of Rs. 1,000 wants to marry a virgin or widow from a respectable family without

any caste distinction. The intending ladies need apply in own handwriting. Correspondence confidential."

Here is the Princely Order of India reduced to advertising:

"Correspondence with returnable photos is invited with a view to wider selection for the marriage of a young, healthy, handsome bachelor Rajkumar of a Rajput Royal Family in a State in Central India who is very highly educated, cultured and accomplished, and possesses considerable landed property and income."

Here is a more modest man who needs a housekeeper:

"Wanted Modest bride with household ability for Gujarati Bania 20. Monthly income 125/-"

Here is one 'subject to a vet's certificate':

"Wanted sweet-tempered grown-up virgin with household ability for well-to-do Gujarati Bania 32."

These advertisements, typical of the Matrimonial columns of Indian newspapers, speak for themselves. They usually appear just above "Situations Vacant." It is only a matter of priority in the same class.

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When some years ago the Sarda Child Marriage Bill was passed in the Indian Legislative Assembly, orthodoxy regarded it as an almost revolutionary measure, a grave encroachment on tradition and precedent. The Bill fixed the marriageable age at fourteen. Until then, marriages were often fixed and the nuptials performed at the ages of three and four, the idea being that a boy and a girl should have their minds made up while they had no minds of their own. In fact it was the most important pastime of parents at the expense of their children, and no one cared to think how the married couple would shape in the years to come.

So important a man as Mahatma Gandhi was married to Kasturba at the early age of thirteen. Gandhi said in his autobiography: "Two innocent children were unwittingly hurling themselves into the ocean of life." Marriage had little significance for a boy of thirteen, and with unusual candour Gandhi confesses that it meant at the time nothing more than "the prospect of good clothes to wear, drum-beating, marriage processions, rich dinners and a strange girl to play with."

Today though very early marriages have disappeared especially in the more westernized or enlightened Indian families, the parental prerogative of interference still persists. Sometimes it takes a positive form, culminating in the search of a bride or groom by the parents themselves; at other times it takes a more passive form—the manœuvring of a situation whereby a boy and a girl find themselves too much together and compelled to believe that their love has sprung from a deep conviction, from something that has been tried and tested. Often marriage results from the young people's belief that it means an emancipation from parental control, and that in its wake will follow a freedom of movement, generally denied to our younger people. One of the things Indian parents are most insistent upon is that the young unmarried people should be indoors at an early hour of the day, for mischief is more difficult to detect when under cover of night than in the day. It is for this reason that some of the most active forms of sex, semi-professional sex, function in India during the hours of the day.

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With two friends, I was taken one day the round of what are euphemistically known as the "private girls" of a big city in India. Our guide—there is another name for him—was in private life a sub-broker on the local stock exchange. In his desire to show us the widely-spread underworld of the city, he had always emphasized that we

## EMPHASIS ON RESPECTABILITY

101

would have to do the round sometime after lunch and certainly before sunset. This was rather difficult, for office hours did not permit of adjustments like these. But the guide was adamant and when the evening was suggested to him, he remarked: "That would be prostitution."

"What else is it?" one of us ventured, wanting to understand the subtle difference. "If she was a prostitute she would admit you at night. She would not do that for a thousand rupees. First she must think of her reputation."

It was a strange market and an even stranger sense of values. But he was the king and we followed him one afternoon wherever he took us.

The most amazing thing about this conducted tour was the constant emphasis on respectability. It was not done to park the car opposite the entrance. It had to be left a little further away, preferably in a side street. We would then follow him in a single line, as if we were on different missions to the same house. Up the stairs we walked, till outside a door he stopped and rang the bell. The door was opened by an elderly member of the family, a pious Hindu with all the relevant caste marks on his forehead and the sacred string across his naked upper torso. He showed us in.

We sat in what appeared to be the drawing-room, a peculiar mixture of art and symbolism, with large mirrors hanging for no reason at all on the wall, and in a corner, a deity with the usual trappings of ceremonial worship: a garland of flowers, burning incense and whatever else was the right thing to do. We sat down without uttering so much as a word, while the elderly man prepared the *pan* with chunam and beetlenut and offered it to us. This was essential. It was the sequel to the formal introduction, after which there was a little patter between the guide and the old man.

"I was just saying to my daughter we had not seen you for a long time."

"I was busy with much work and the bazaar," the guide replied, explaining his absence.

"Of course, of course."

"The market is not steady and my presence is required daily. Thousands of rupees are made and lost every minute."

"Of course, of course."

"Then there is so much business at the races. You remember my friend who came here last month?"

The old man pretended to recollect.

"Aha, aha," he said, after a while.

"He lost three lacs of rupees in cotton."

The old man was not impressed, treating this as a daily occurrence. "He will get it back," he said with the air of a man of experience.

"Already he made two lacs yesterday," the guide assured him.

That made the old man feel much better, for it meant that business would continue as usual. All this fatuous conversation was a little unnerving if only because of the large amounts mentioned. But the guide was reassuring. He made out as if he had a cut-rate everywhere and for some obscure reason he said it with an assurance which made us believe him.

During this patter, there walked unobtrusively into the room a young girl, pigtailed, oiled, dressed in clean clothes. She might have been sitting there for no reason at all, nor would one have paid much attention to her, for she looked mediocre to the point of respectability. We would never have noticed her but for the prodding of the guide who, looking sheepishly at the ground, said to us in his pidgin English: "This the one."

The girl was hardly four-feet-seven. In years she could not have been anything more than in her early teens. In behaviour she was shy, almost timid. There was no make-up on her face, no brazenness of expression, nothing

## A BOGUS RADIO STAR

103

to suggest anything but the respectability which, as our guide had emphasized, was the keynote of the place. She wore a frilled voile blouse, showing a trace of a make-shift brassière. Her bust was like a child's rather than a woman's. Occasionally she cast a glance at us. When observed, she would turn her eyes away and pretend she was not looking at us at all. With her little handkerchief she mopped the beads of perspiration on her mouth and continued to look a picture of bovine martyrdom.

The inspection completed, we conveyed our decision to the guide, who never resented a refusal, for, as he said, there was no obligation to stay, so long as we were courteous enough to pay for the beetlenut we had consumed. "Not in the hands of the father," the guide quickly corrected my friend. "That would insult him. Give it to me little child outside."

The subtlety of it all was extremely uncanny. It was along a main street that we stopped while our guide got out to make the preliminary inquiries. He had impressed upon us earlier that we were paying a visit to a radio star.

We waited in the car till we were called in. Up a dirty flight of stairs, in a building which was a little better than a chawl, we followed him into two almost bare adjacent little rooms on the second floor. There was a table, two yellow tin trunks, a bed covered with dirty linen, in the other. This was the apartment of an Indian radio star. Inquiries made at the local All-India Radio Station revealed that the girl sang over the air roughly once every three weeks when her share of the takings came to Rs. 35/-, which is less than £3. This, however, was not her main source of income. The radio was merely a stepping-stone to success.

She was hardly subtle in her conversation, nor did she affect the pose of respectability. She was a Muslim from Central India and compared to the Hindu, less bovine.

She looked more the woman of the world, the Indian equivalent to the Edwardian Follies Girl using heavy adornment as an aid to beauty. The only trace of the cow in her was to be noticed in the way she chewed *pan*. It might as well have been the cud.

As we got up to leave, I cast a furtive glance at the other room. There was no cupboard and her clothes hung on a thick cord which ran diagonally across a corner of the room. It showed all the marks of poverty, squalor and want. The room had nothing attractive to offer to the mind or eye. It filled one not so much with disgust as with pity, if only because of the effort she made to establish herself in the world, stooping as she did to the lowest to shake off the poverty into which she had been born.

Our next call was at a house in a park. Rows of fairly modern, jerry-built houses stood next to each other, gaily-coloured from outside. These were the houses of the lower-middle class. We went into a ground-floor apartment in one of them and waited in the sitting-room while our guide went into a room inside.

A few minutes later, we were called in. The room was dark, for the windows had been closed to keep the glare away. In a bed in this room, heavily covered with blankets, lay a sick man about forty years of age. He had fever and had been ailing, one could see, for some days. His face was unshaven and on the table near his bed were bottles of medicine. A younger man, holding a child in his arms, had shown us into the room. He might have been a member of the household or a servant. It was difficult to tell.

"What are we doing here?" I said to our guide, for the purpose of our visit was not to call on a sick man with high fever.

"He only see you for approval," the guide broke out with one of his periodical outbursts of pidgin English.

The sick man nodded and we were ushered out of the bedroom. We waited in the sitting-room once more.

Everything seemed so mysterious, I felt it necessary to break the silence and ask: "Can you tell me what we are supposed to be doing here?"

"Please to wait," he replied. Then he gave a couple of rupees to the young man, uttering some incoherent words to him of which I could only understand one: "Taxi". In exchange our guide was presented with the baby which he held to his utter discomfort and some derision from us.

Then he explained the situation to us. The sick man was a school-teacher. The school was not far from the place and the young man had gone to the school to fetch a girl in a taxi.

"A school-girl?" I said, slightly revolted by the idea.

"Yes. He gives her two, three rupees for sweets and he does business."

It was unbelievable. We waited to see it for ourselves. In less than a quarter of an hour, there arrived on the scene a young girl in a saree. She barely stood four feet. Her age was difficult to guess, but it could not have been more than twelve. She was a child, even though physically she had matured as children do in India.

We were too stunned to say very much and our background of sophistication acquired by years of free-living in all the capitals of Europe seemed insufficient to make us face up to the situation which confronted us—that of the hawking by a school-teacher of a school-girl for immoral purposes. When Katherine Mayo wrote in *Mother India* about temple virgins she shocked the genteel society of our country. Mahatma Gandhi dismissed the book as a "gutter-inspector's report", and India contented itself with the belief that Miss Mayo's writing was only anti-Indian propaganda. But even the temple virgins of South India I was prepared to let pass as a South Indian custom which had been in existence for some years, but the immoral use of school children—and according to our guide, who spoke from some experience, the practice was

not uncommon nor unknown to the authorities in charge of law and public morality—was too disgusting for words.

“Do you know there is a law against this sort of thing?” I ventured after a while.

Our guide laughed. He said with the air of a man who knows: “This is India.” It was a harsh comment, for in the general desire to concentrate all our energies on politics, we had hopelessly neglected the decay of the whole moral fibre of our society and closed our eyes, in the name of piety, to some of the worst evils of the age. We had dismissed comments upon us as “gutter-inspectors’ reports”. We had believed in our enthusiasm that books like *Mother India* were only biased writings and we went on merrily towards the main theme and purpose of our existence: Freedom.

These are the obvious forms of sex and their inclusion here is only for the sake of comparison with sex as it is served up in the West. The point of difference is that while the predominant note in the West is one of a *blasé* sophistication, almost to the point of perfection, sex in India is clumsy, naïve, often not even grown up. While no intelligent man visiting a brothel in Paris can be shocked at the elaborate preparations made for alluring customers, the Indian counterpart is crude, often unclean and so primitive as to be even dangerous in point of hygiene.

Yet in an India in which all these things can happen, orthodoxy and the *purdah* get hot and bothered at the sight of a nude picture, however beautiful, or a nude woman however lovely.

Ronu Gupta, the youngest Chief Presidency Magistrate in India, struck not long ago a more modern note when he acquitted the proprietors of a show-house in Calcutta’s main street, Chowrangee, who were charged with exhibiting a moving picture of a nude woman dancing. Said Gupta: “In my opinion it is absurd to suggest in the year of grace 1941 that it is obscene to show pictures of a nude woman dancing. Every big city in Europe freely allows human

beings to dance in the nude on the public stage. The sight of a nude woman is not in itself in any way an obscene sight, except to a diseased mind, and the law against obscenity is not intended to be applied to such circumstances."

How much better it would be for India were there to be a few more Ronu Guptas among our magistrates with as bold and healthy an outlook on life in our orthodox society.

It is one of the amazing phenomena of Hindu society that while of all other communities in India, it lays the greatest emphasis on morality, this insistence does not often go beyond a superficial prudery, which has no basis in practice at all. A great many of married Hindu gentlemen of the class that can afford it, have mistresses as a regular feature of their normal life. Nor is it their fault. Often married at a ridiculously young age, their marriage is nothing more than a household arrangement, completely divorced from such things as emotion, passion, or the sex urge. Nor, broadly to understand that there is something more in marriage than the keeping of his children. So strong is the element of orthodoxy that at times it is regarded as immoral for a woman to have any primeval urge, even for her husband. Her married sex life is abnormally placid and she spends the better part of her life surrounded by equally feelingless women, who go in herds, like cattle, completely separate from their men. In consequence, the man has to find his satisfaction elsewhere, nor does the woman resent this arrangement. It is like the division of labour. The wife and the mistress are equally essential to the man's life and neither seem to resent the other, so long as the man's purse permits the supporting of the two. All this is of the less sophisticated forms of Indian life. There is almost a dramatic change the moment one enters that smaller circle of westernized people, who

believe that free living is a sign of modernity and that sheer promiscuity without a basis of love or affection, is in itself a sign of advanced civilization. It is one of the lesser known facts about Indian women, that while on the average there is less scope for what is generally called "decadence" among them in comparison with the women of the West, if only because conditions of life in India do not give them the opportunity, those, who have that opportunity and feel the inclination, go far beyond the women of the West. Westernized Indian women bear out the truth of the very ordinary maxim which says that a little learning is a dangerous thing.

Perhaps the best idea of the ridiculous stage which has been reached by sections of "Society" with the capital S, is given by the fact that women appear offended when invited without their boy friends, even when invited with their husbands.

All this is in no way shocking to those who have lived life in the broader sense of that word. What is so disappointing is that, out of all this, nothing very much results in the form of depth of feeling. I believe that depth of feeling can make any relationship between a man and a woman moral, the absence of it or the making light of a relationship makes it ugly. It is the cosmopolitan's theory of living that that which is beautiful is also moral and that which is unbeautiful is likewise immoral, however much it may have had the benediction of orthodoxy or the blessings of caste and community.

What is lacking in women in India is depth. While the more westernized have adopted an easy attitude towards sex, they do not seem to have acquired that depth of soul without which sex is nothing more than animal copulation. It is not possible, broadly speaking, to have an affair, in the fullest sense of that word, with the Indian woman. The fact that a man feels he has not got all that he wants, is not due to a reluctance on the woman's part to give. It is just not there. It is not a commodity measurable by physical values. It is something that is reflected

## ORTHODOX OBTUSENESS

109

in speech, action, mood, a flicker of an eyelid, an appropriateness of timing, an adjustment of individuals. All these can come only with broader education and experience which can only be acquired by living a life free from the domination of the pettiness which generally encrusts Indian social life.

Communal restrictions of marriage and the ostracism by orthodoxy of those who break with tradition and marry out of the community are not only signs of the backwardness in existence now, but a perpetuation of that backwardness. Mr. Gandhi can do nothing to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity, so long as the smaller pandits and maulanas who preach the gospel of communal living and communal thinking, communal kitchens, communal sport and communal marriage are allowed to infest the thought and mind of the people. The more young people in India marry out of their community, the more will this communal problem recede into the background. For the child of a Hindu-Muslim marriage can neither be a Hindu nor a Muslim. He can only be an Indian and these sons and daughters of our country will learn to regard India as an entity indivisible by caste or community. But to voice such an opinion in India even in the 1940's is to court the stigma of being a heretic. 'It has not been allowed since the days of our forefathers', the conventionalists say, 'why should we have changes now?'

In no form of thought or its expression would so radical a view be tolerated. An Indian film daring to tackle the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity in the only way in which it should be tackled—viz. intermarriage—would be shouted down by the audience, were a Board of Censors to have the guts to allow it to pass in the first instance. I refuse to accept the excuse that this total refusal of Indian public opinion to tolerate any breach of the rules of orthodoxy and its uncompromising intolerance of any view that urges a change of the *status quo* has anything to do with the presence of what Mr. Gandhi calls 'the third party'. There are very few, if any, Hindu followers of

Mahatma Gandhi who would give their daughters in marriage to a Muslim, and there are even fewer Muslims who would risk courting the displeasure of their community, even were they to believe in the solution of the communal problem by intermarriage. Even the Mahatma, great as his influence is over the mind and thought of India, has steered clear of advocating intermarriage. It is doubtful if his great hold over the country would survive the advocacy of such an experiment.

So that caste, community and orthodox obtuseness are the chief factors which determine the conduct of the individual in respect of love, sex and morals. There is no freedom for the individual in this sphere. There is no likelihood of there ever being any freedom in this respect. More than men, the older ones among women—are the chief offenders. They dominate the lives of the younger people more brutally than any tyrant or dictator.

Perhaps even more than the British, it is these old, orthodox, sexless, intolerant women who stand in the way of this country's advancement. By reason of their sex, they regard themselves immune from the harshness of criticism. The backwardness in which they have lived gives them an added immunity, which results from man's sense of chivalry towards dumb, helpless animals. But they do not content themselves by living their own lives. They presume to know the secrets of life, as they have learnt in the *zenana* and in the company of other women—the only real company they accept. They presume to be qualified to guide, or dictate to, others when in a position to do so. They admit of no argument, even were it based on Science or learning. The dogmas and shibboleths of caste are the laws which guide their conduct. These form the basis of their life and religion. This takes one to the almost absurd attitude of orthodoxy—chiefly orthodox women—to birth control. In a serious book published by so respectable a London firm of Publishers as Allen and Unwin, entitled **WOMEN AND MARRIAGE** by P. Thomas, the author explains the attitude of moralists in India to birth control.

Thomas says: "An analysis of the objections of moralists will convince us that these are founded on no sounder authority than the old repugnance to sex. To the moralist, whether Hindu, Christian or Muslim, sex itself is bad enough, and he simply cannot imagine people complicating it with pessaries, sheaths and other appliances."

After which, when the *Bombay Sentinel* appeared one day in May 1941 with the headline: "Woman With Nine Children Offers *Satyagraha*", one applauded with zest this echo of Marie Stopes.

Let us go back a few years to see how women lived in this great country that is ours.

In the *Viswa-Bharati* of September 1940, Tagore described the women of his boyhood days, which were spent chiefly in Calcutta. Tagore said: "Women used to go about in the stifling darkness of closed palanquins; they shrank from the idea of riding in carriages, and even to use an umbrella in sun or rain was considered unwomanly. Any woman who was so bold as to wear the new-fangled bodice, or shoes on her feet, was scornfully nicknamed 'memsahib'; that is to say, one who had cast off all sense of propriety or shame. If any woman unexpectedly encountered a strange man, one outside her family circle, her veil would promptly descend to the very tip of her nose, and she would at once turn her back to him. The palanquins in which women went out, shut as closely as their apartments in the house. An additional covering, a kind of thick tilt, completely enveloped the palanquin of a rich man's daughters or daughters-in-law so that it looked like a moving tomb. By its side went the *durwan*. His work was to sit in the entrance and watch the house, to tend his beard, safely to conduct the money to the bank and the women to their relatives' houses, and on festival days to dip the lady of the house into the Ganges, closed palanquin and all."

That was the generation that went before. Today, the Indian woman, they say, is more enlightened. Much has been written about the dawn of a new age in womanhood, the sharing of 'the struggle' by her, her awareness

of her rights and responsibilities. All this sounds grandiose, but let us lift the *purdah* and peep inside.

Behold, there is a Conference! The All-India Women's Conference: A President, a chairman, a chairman of a Reception Committee, half a dozen secretaries, a dozen Vice-Presidents, a handful of Treasurers, a Committee so large that it would be impossible for any one to know anything about anyone else. Perhaps the most unique honour would be that of being an ordinary member.

These are the grown-ups. The little girls of the schools and colleges also have a Conference. Let me take you to such a Conference—a conference held at the Jinnah Hall, of the Women Students of the University of Bombay. The year was 1941, the month was September. According to a report appearing in the local papers, "picturesque placards with fantastic figures of women writhing under male dominance, or breaking prison bars and with such inscriptions as 'Awake, Arise, Act', 'No More Yielding', 'Break Open the Bars' decorated the four walls and windows of Jinnah Hall." To accentuate the melodrama, the little girls passed a varied assortment of resolutions: They

- 1) expressed sorrow at Tagore's death;
- 2) regarded Britain's War as an Imperialist War;
- 3) protested against Government's action in detaining students without trial;
- 4) suggested that the Vice-Chancellor should be elected by the students;
- 5) suggested that the curricula and examinations should be altered;
- 6) demanded Independence for India;
- 7) congratulated students on recent demonstrations and strikes;
- 8) expressed belief in students' inherent right to strike and picket.

Maybe the women of our time should also be carted about in palanquins and occasionally dipped in the Ganges

or the nearest available pool of water, or be made to wash the pots and pans and generally to do useful things like putting buttons on men's pants and when they get restless to bear children to the greater glory of India and its 400,000,000.

Let me take you somewhere else to see something more of the enlightenment which is Indian womanhood. It is a Thursday or Sunday evening at the Cricket Club of India, over which presides—at 7 P. M. Indian Standard Time—the genius of Ken Mac and his Dance Band. The term "Cricket" used in respect of this club may be dismissed as an euphemism. It should rather be called the Emancipated Women's Dance and Double-Deck Sandwich Club of India.

Here we have watched the great struggle of the modern Indian woman to emancipate herself. As with Dominion Status, we have watched with awe the gradual transition from the Lambeth Walk to the Palais Glide, with the intervening period of decadence, which was epitomized in the Boompie Daisy!

Struggle! Yes, here too are aspects of our country's struggle. How well I remember the Negro soldier who went up to an Indian lady and said: "Ma'am, may I borrow your frame for the next struggle?"

Of these women, Churchill might have said in his mighty prose: "They have nothing to offer but.... Sweat.... and.... sweat."

It's all a far cry from Tagore's palanquin women, whom the *durwan* used to dip in the Ganges. The veil has been lifted. Freedom must also be theirs, the suffragettes-in-embryo say. Women are-equal-to-Men! Mean-*ben ki jai!* *Mridulaben ki jai!* *Sub lok tali!*"

These efforts at emancipation are confined to small sections of the Indian communities. The majority of women continue to live under the yoke of an unreal morality, even though they may not be rigorously put

under *purdah* and pushed into the background. A sane and healthy, not a hectic and decadent, mode of emancipation should be found by breaking down the suffocating rule of orthodoxy, the barriers of communalism which restrict the field of marriage from being an All-India one, the commercialization and mechanization of marriage and the ignorance of the modern technique of birth-control.

What should be done for our women? Thomas writes in his book: "A working knowledge of contraceptive methods among people of marriageable age would inevitably lead to the breakdown of contemporary Indian morality. That would be beneficial too, for contemporary morality is badly tainted with medieval asceticism and superstition, and detrimental to the welfare of humanity. We want a morality which aims more at the happiness of mankind than the whim of an imaginary god-head. And for this new moral values are required."

These are brave words belonging to a brave new world which some of us would like to create out of the morass which is orthodoxy in India. But not many have read Thomas. Fewer still would accept his judgment.

## VII

## ODDS AND ENDS

INDIA HAS BEEN WRITTEN UPON BY MANY PEOPLE IN MORE ways than one—culturally, politically, socially and otherwise. The literature on the subject, however, is vast and other- valuable. But the average man has often not the time nor the urge to read it. He is, however, interested in little bits and pieces picked out of common everyday occurrences which go to make up a country or spring from the people who live in or pass through it. Such bits have also a value of their own, as they throw a sidelight on men and matters. Here are some out of those that have come my way.

## A VICEREGAL GARDEN PARTY

115

Let me begin at the top of the social ladder.

Have you ever been invited to a Viceregal garden party? You have got to realize that in the first place someone has got to command someone else. So the Viceroy begins by commanding the A. D. C. This A. D. C. is a sort of "spirit" like those you read of in the Arabian Nights. He is always where you want him to be. You turn right and he is there, waiting, you turn left and he is also there. Hence the expression A. D. C.-in-waiting.

To be an A. D. C. is regarded as a great social triumph, the equivalent perhaps of a golfer's achievement when made a member of the Royal and Ancient, or that of a scientist when graced with a D. C. L. *honoris causa*. A. D. C.'s are usually chosen from the pick of the English gentry. They are the boys who didn't go from Winchester to Sandhurst!

Their duties in India are of an arduous character. They have to introduce Sir X to Lady Y, and when they think that they have just got to know each other, their instructions are to break up the *tête-à-tête* and begin all over again, the idea being that no one should get too familiar with any one else at a Viceregal party. Likewise, at dances, they are expected to help out the wall-flowers to dance—even the large, tubby women. A. D. C.'s must make conversation. For instance, a Muslim Leaguer must be asked about the future of the Congress and to a mother of five children the question must be posed: "Do you believe in birth-control?"

To go to the party, the route is long and circuitous. Three rows of cars and one row of policemen. At last you arrive and find that the first available table is only a quarter of a mile away and you have already parked your car three-quarters of a mile away from the entrance. A quarter of an hour later, having sat down exhausted on a chair, you find you have to stand up again when Their Excellencies arrive to the strains of the British National Anthem. But even then you see through your binoculars

only a few figures at the nine-furlong post. Colours—pale beige, blue sash and cap, or whatever they may be. You remain standing till someone tells you: "I think they have arrived."

One day Bateman must draw a picture of the Viceroy, who was already there, waiting to receive his guests.

To such a party as this I went in January 1940. Around me in little groups sat the élite of Society—motor magnates, the diplomatic corps, judges' wives, judges and more judges' wives. Somehow you can tell a judge's wife at a Viceregal garden party as surely as you could spot a dandelion on the centre court at Wimbledon in the days when Tilden used to play Cochet or was it Vines?

It was a happy gathering, like the meeting of the clans on the heathery moors of Scotland, which for us of THIS INDIA was the pitch of the Cricket Club of India, the delightful rendezvous of onions and garlic.

When tea and coffee and cakes had been served, I saw the people next to me stand up. The host was on his way to say 'How-do-you-do?' He came gradually nearer—then to our table. I expected him to say:

"Now who are you?" And I'd have to reply:

"Your Excellency, I am one who called on page 92 of your Visitors Book."

"Yes of course, I remember you. Last time you signed on page 30."

How well he remembered each and every one of his guests. He made you feel at ease almost at once and in his cordial handshake you had the assurance that when he retired from service and returned 'home', he would even follow up the connection by asking his secretary to send you a Christmas card every year.

Trailing in his wake and sometimes even ahead of him were his men in grey coats. They reminded me of the Proctor turning into the street of St. George and the Dragon with his Bullers. The only difference was in the shape of their hats.

Then came the blue hour of the evening. The sun had gradually gone down. The band which had been marching up and down the Cricket Club of India pitch, playing everything from the March Militaire to Wagon Wheels suddenly broke out into a trumpet effect which sounded like The Last Post. More appropriately could Linlithgow, who was the Viceroy, have crooned from the mike the refrain of *I can't Give you Anything but Luv*. No Dominion Status—only love! And so, having mixed freely with his guests, as the Anglo-Indian paper puts it the next morning, he retired from his own party.

Bateman must draw another picture also—that of the Viceroy who waited for his guests to leave.

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Another 'high class' story. The Bombay Governor had just returned from one of his tours of the Province. He was accompanied by a special correspondent of the *Times of India*. When the correspondent returned sometime in December 1940, the following specially-contributed account of the tour appeared in the *Times of India*. "Looking back on these six days, crammed from breakfast till midnight, I saw nothing but a blur of public platforms, garden parties, Civic Guards, garlands, illuminated addresses, outstretched hands, bunting bands. It is the sort of feeling one has on waking from a not-too-vivid-dream."

The special correspondent went on to say: "Whilst most of you were still sipping your morning tea, the Governor was reviewing a Police parade, standing bare-headed and at attention for the best part of an hour, with no protection from the sloping rays of the morning sun."

This was a year and a quarter after Britain was at war with Germany and less than a year before Pearl Harbour.

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The wife of a former Governor of Bombay, then Lady Lumley, found it difficult to remember Indian names. One day she dined at the Willingdon Club, whose President was an old Cambridge man, a Parsi, impeccably perfect in manners. His name was Mr. Powvala. Translated, the name would mean 'bread-man'. That, however, was not how it stuck in Lady Lumley's mind, but rather because of her children, who, when the name crept up in conversation the next day at Government house, were very amused because when they pronounced it, it sounded more like 'Po-walla.' The children were told never to say it like that again. After which Her Ladyship said to herself: "Well, that's one name I'll never forget."

Two weeks later at the Bombay Races, the Governor and his wife were walking out of the paddock when Lady Lumley recognized the same familiar face. Without question it was the President of the Willingdon Club and she even remembered his name.

She smiled at him. The gentleman, recognizing her as the wife of the Governor, doffed his hat. Her Ladyship stopped to speak to him. "How are you Mr. Powvala?" she said, feeling very proud that she had at last remembered an Indian name. In broad American he replied: "Madam, I am the American Consul. My name is Waterman."

It was another lady—an Indian Lady with the capital "L", who had come to hear Sir Francis Low speak at the Rotary Club. The editor of the *Times of India* had just returned from the Middle East. She listened to him with great attention, applauding appreciatively. The Editor knight described the whole campaign using place-names like Tobruk, El-Alamein, Tripoli, Keren and Benghazi. Now and again he also referred to the Western Desert. When Low finished speaking he sat down amidst tremendous applause, to which the lady in question had made a substantial contribution. Then she turned to me and said: "How can the Western Desert be somewhere in the Middle East?"

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A picture of India would not be complete without an occasional reference to the Englishman-in-India. Nine months after the declaration of war the European community in Bombay met to give expression to their feelings about the war situation and, "to offer their services for conscription in such capacities as would best serve the needs of the Allies." This was in May 1940. The important resolution of the day was moved by Mr. Noel Paton and seconded by Mr. Bramble. It read: "This committee desires to place on record its strong feeling that every European British subject who is able to undertake the obligation should enrol in the Auxiliary Forces." Not many weeks later Mr. Amery made the astonishing statement in the commons: "It has been found that the earlier Act providing for the calling up of Europeans for the examination of their fitness and willingness to undertake various forms of national service, military and civil, has not produced the requisite number of volunteers and the ordinance which the Governor-General proposes to introduce with the approval of the House enables him to call them up compulsorily." It was as a result of this ordinance that the 'white and off-white' (the phrase is Beverley Nichols') man-power was mobilized to form the great Division—or was it an Army?—of chair-borne troops. Someone said their badge stands for a "star sinking into a sea of red tape and blue ink."

What the real Britisher felt about his compatriots in India is related by the following incident for which I can vouch. It was in the October of 1941 and more precisely a dance night at the Taj Mahal Hotel. At a table by themselves sat five young R. A. F. officers. They were the real thing. Some of them had been over Berlin and over the cities of Germany. Others had been fighter pilots who had taken part in the blitz over England. At a table next to them was an Englishman in his forties, long past the age when his actions could be excused on the ground of exuberance of youth. With him was a youngish girl, who was his perpetual escort on Friday and Saturday nights at the Taj. They got up for every dance almost

with the first bar of music, applauded for every encore and came back to their table to snatch a bite before getting up on their feet again to the strains of the next dance tune. They did this through every dance, while the five young men sat quietly and watched this happen. There was no lady at their table. There was no one to make conversation. When the time came for the young men to leave, I saw one of them stop at the table of the Englishman and his girl and pin a note to the fork which rested on a half-done cutlet. With pardonable journalistic curiosity I craned my neck to read it. It read: "Enjoy yourself chum. We are fighting the war for you."

This was not a stray story, it was typical of the resentment felt by young men, fighting grimly for England, against such countrymen of theirs in India.

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A peep into Anglo India: I remember noticing a girl who often came to Green's. I liked the look of her and I had a strong feeling that she was not quite unaware of me. I couldn't get an introduction, however. Every time I saw her I think I made it clearer that I would like to meet her and, if I was any judge of situations like these, I felt that given an opportunity it wasn't quite impossible.

It came one night after the American Women's Tea Dance—the sort of tea dance that begins at 5-30 and goes on to midnight and with the difference that instead of tea Americans used to drink scotch, which was plentiful in those days. After the tea dance I happened to look in at Green's and feeling particularly bright I joined a party where I knew one or two people. I found the girl sitting next to me and since no one would introduce us we introduced ourselves.

My conversation must have been particularly good that evening for I found myself giving her a lift home. In the car one of the routine approaches came into play. I

showed amazement at her being allowed to be dropped home at that late hour by someone she did not even know. Shyly she protested and said: "Of course I know you. I know all about you."

"Do you?"

"Of course I do—you are the man who wrote *Gone With The Wind*." Miss Margaret Mitchell will forgive me the slight loan of her reputation.

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Sir H. P. Mody made a speech in June 1941, less than six months before Pearl Harbour, on "India and the War." The platform was that of the Rotary Club. The occasion was more than special. Even ladies were invited. Speaking, mark you, on this serious subject, Sir H. P. Mody said:—"The only manufacture which continued unabated in this country was the manufacture of babies, regardless of rising costs and falling markets." He visualized (or couldn't visualize, I am not sure), in the style of Lord Curzon in the last war—Parsis taking their beer in the cellars of Munich. He referred to the diet of macaroni which produced the finest long-distance runners and the capture of an Italian mule corps where the mules offered the stiffest resistance. He referred to the Jewish Regiment in the last war, who were known as the "Jordan" Highlanders and whose motto was "No advance without security." (This last joke I remember hearing in the Oxford Union in the year 1932, and even then some said they had heard it before.) He spoke of discovering a business appeal when he had lost his sex appeal. Now and again you heard a reference to words like 'democracy' or 'defence' or 'potential capacity of the country or industry,' but I suppose this was a mere digression. As if by way of *obiter dictu*, he painted a picture of the defence of India, of air-raid shelters that did not exist, of trenches that had not yet been dug, of propaganda that was half-hearted and amateurish. The deplorable lack of adequate measures for defence did not

make him shudder. His only comment was:—"I cannot see at any time this country being able to afford a military expenditure." He had probably never heard of the conscription of capital and labour, of the German drive to re-arm, of the Soviet Five-Year Plans, or of the nationalization of the means of production and distribution.

At a time when over more than half the face of Europe, freedom of the spirit was no more, when whole peoples were at the mercy of morons in uniforms, when hordes of Hun soldiery had annihilated innocent, peace-loving citizens of the Western world and like a herd of elephants trampled on the flower that was mankind, when thousands of gallant soldiers fighting for their hearth and home had lain dead on the battlefield of World War II, when whole countries, which were like mighty trees in the forest, had been uprooted in the twinkling of an eye, and when the theme song of the time was the anguished cry of a woman, wailing for a lost husband or a lost child, it required a strange sense of humour to be able to stand up after lunch and give the sort of performance which Gillie Potter might have given in the music-halls of London before the war. Sir H. P. Mody's speech was a classic example of this sort of humour—my predominant feeling on hearing it was to want to cry rather than to applaud and laugh.

The important thing was that soon after this speech he was nominated a member of the Viceroy's Most Honourable Executive Council.

A couple of days before Churchill had spoken to the people of Britain. He struck a different note. Let me quote one single para from it. Churchill said: "I see Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land guarding the fields which their fathers had tilled from time immemorial. I see them guarding their homes, where mothers and wives pray, ah yes, for there are times when all pray for the safety of their loved ones, the return of the bread winner, of their champion, of their protector. I see the ten thousand villages of Russia, where the means

of existence was wrung so hardly from the soil, but where there are still primordial human joys where maidens laugh and children play. I see advancing upon all this in hideous onslaught the Nazi war machine with its clanking, heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers, its crafty expert Agents fresh from the cowing and tying down of a dozen countries. I see also the dull, drilled, docile, brutish masses of Hun soldiers plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts. I see German bombers and fighters in the sky, still smarting from many a British whipping, going where they hope to find a safer and, they believe, an easier prey. Behind all this glare, I see that small group of men who planned, organized and launched this cataract of horrors upon mankind".

The difference between the two speeches was equal to 'This India.'

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Let me take another sample—a man often quoted in the Anglo-Indian and the British Press as a representative spokesman of India. He is a knight, a nominated Director of the Reserve Bank, nominated again as Chairman of the Bombay War Gifts fund. His name is Sir Homi Mehta. The important thing about him from my point of view is that he is said to be worth about two crores. In a letter which appeared in the *Times of India* of May 14, 1941, column, Sir Homi made the following comment on Mr. Gandhi's leadership of the Congress. He said:—"Does Mr. Gandhi think that the whole of India is void of common sense? . . . We all know that he has the backing of many illiterate ryots in India who believe that he is a Mahatma and a spiritual leader and he, therefore, cannot be wrong. We also know that the illiterate are the bulk of India's population and amongst such his voice is supreme. But this does not mean India. The intelligentsia of India is the real India." (The italics are mine).

My comment in the columns of the *Bombay Chronicle* was that Sir Homi's letter was "pitifully unintelligent." The Bombay knight replied from Bangalore in a letter to my Editor, in which, among other things, he said that I would have to live many years before I could teach my grandmother *how to suck an egg*. (The italics are mine).

I once felt it necessary, in the columns of the *Bombay Chronicle*, to impress upon the Governor of Bombay, then Sir Roger Lumley, the need to urge Sir Homi Mehta, the Chairman of the Bombay War Gifts Committee, to refrain from making comments on Gandhiji, which, instead of helping the cause only tended to aggravate national feeling. My reason for doing so was that it was a futile policy to allow the Chairman of the War Gifts Committee, so long as he held the position, to make such comments, which, of course, he would have been free to offer, had he not chosen to take up the appointment made by the Governor for the furtherance of the War effort. Apart from their impropriety, it was interesting to examine his views on their merits.

As President of the Democratic Union, Sir Homi said:—

"Now I ask you, suppose Mr. Gandhi was living in England, would he enjoy the freedom he does in this country? Certainly not. I tell you that he would undoubtedly be held up for waging war against the king for which he would either receive capital punishment, or else he would be jailed for life. If he was living in America, he would meet with a similar fate. But if he was living in Germany, Italy or Japan, he would be shot dead."

Did this make sense? The point I then made was that Mahatma Gandhi was living in India, Churchill was living in England, and Roosevelt in America. If you sent Churchill to Germany, Italy or Japan, when the war was on, he, too, would have been shot dead, and Roosevelt also.

## 12.

### SOME NAMES IN WHO'S WHO

One day to amuse myself I turned over the pages of *Who's Who*. The edition in our office is a comparatively old one of 1935, but it's the authentic English *Who's Who*, read all over the English-speaking world. I had read some bits before and they seemed so refreshing to read again. The high lights of the book were Osbert Sitwell and Bernard Shaw. Their account of themselves made fascinating reading.

Let me reproduce them here. Sitwell says:

**SITWELL, Osbert:** Poet, playwright, novelist; writer of essays, born: 3, Arlington Street, W., 6 Dec. 1892., eldest son of Sir George Sitwell, q.v.; brother of Edith and Sacher-well Sitwell; q.v.; Educ: during the holidays from Eton, Grenadier Guards 1913-1919; deeply interested in any manifestations of sport; founded the Renishaw Park Golf Club, 1913; Whiston Golf Club 1914; Played against Yorkshire Cricket Eleven (left-handed) when 7 years old; was put down for the W.C.C. on day of birth by W. G. Grace, but has now abandoned all other athletic interests in order to urge the adoption of new sports such as Pelota, Kif-Kif, and the Pengo, (specially the latter); founded the Rememba Bomba League, 1924; re-constituted it Nov. 1927; interested in all matters of currency and advocates return to gold standard at lower rate and the abutting of the Stock Exchange for 5 days out of...; recreations: entertaining the rich and charity generally. Tel. Address: Pauperloo."

In the account of George Bernard Shaw we find the following: "Diet: Vegetarian; recreation: anything except sport; Telegraphic address: Socialist Parl-London; Trade Union: Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers."

I continued to turn the pages and chanced to see the name of a Bombay knight, Sir Byramjee Jeejeebhoy. How he got into *Who's Who* was somewhat of a mystery

to me. But I overcame my early surprise and read through the account of himself. It read as follows:

Jeejeebhoy, Sir Byramjee, Kt; cr. 1928; J. P.; owner of 9,000 acres in Salsette; large landed owner... Director, several joint stock companies... Motors: Y 3333, X 888, Bom. Z 9876. Clubs: Willingdon, Orient, Asian, Bombay: Ladies, Poona."

Now I ask you, does a man ever put down the numbers of his three motor cars in *Who's Who?* It seems incredible, but it can be verified in the 1935 edition.

\* \* \*

There was an elderly Parsee lady who had often told a friend of mine, who knew something about racing, that if he got a good tip, he shouldn't forget her. Dutifully, some days later, he rang her up and told her to have ten rupees on a certain horse.

"Really," she asked him. "But is it sure to win?"

A little embarrassed, he said, he hoped it would.

"Thank you very much," she said. "God bless you, my son, for remembering an old lady."

All that was very nice and the young man felt that he had done his good deed for the day.

Ten minutes later, his telephone rang again. It was the same dear old lady.

"Listen," she said, her tone was serious. "Tell the jockey to bring the horse from the outside."

This appeared a very shrewd observation, for this was precisely the way the horse should have been ridden. But her remark baffled him, for he thought the old lady didn't know the first thing about horses and racing.

Being curious he asked her: "What makes you say that?"

"Ah," she said, "you see I read in the papers that outsiders pay a big dividend."

I was at a railway station in Madras seeing a friend off. It was a crowded train as most trains always are in India. There was one single inter-class compartment into which had crammed about a dozen people complete with their yellow tin trunks, their *koojas* of water, their bed rolls, and their baskets of fruit. One of the passengers was also carrying a parrot cage complete with the parrot. In the excitement, another passenger trying to get into the same compartment knocked down the parrot cage, unable to contain the owner. There was a sharp exchange of angry looks, when finally the owner of the parrot cage, unable to contain his feelings any longer, said: "Arré, mun, you are a who?" It would be difficult to translate this into ordinary English, except very freely when it would probably mean: "Who the hell do you think you are?" The man to whom it was addressed was most offended. Retaining his equanimity, he replied: "Vel, if aeye yam a who, Mister, you are a no doubt."

The stations of India are the vulnerable points of India's sensitivity.

In the *Times of India* of July 7, 1941 appeared a letter stated to have been written by Babu Lal. Bali, a Jemadar in the Indian Medical Department, serving with a Labour company in the Middle East. A Jemadar, mark you, a Viceroy's Commissioned Officer in the Indian army but drawing much less pay than a British sergeant. The letter was issued by the most brainy department of the Government of India—the Department of Propaganda. I reproduce an extract from it.

"On April 20, we left for Massawa by lorry. The town was very nicely built... In the streets we saw hither and thither starved natives with torn clothes and even women, with a cloth round their loins and breast... One day in the camp came a man who was blind in one eye. He could speak Hindustani and he told me the way of treatment of the Italians with the natives. He said he was a barman, and when war broke out, he was forced to carry a rifle. One day one of the Italian sergeants was so cruel that he hit the man with a stone and he lost his eye. This is the morality and civilization which Italians show in Eritrea. The man told us, every Italian soldier could go in any native house and bring any girl he liked. The parents who objected were beaten to death sometimes and if anyone filed a suit in the Court, the judge would remark: 'Are you not proud that an Italian has taken a fancy to your daughter or sister?' *A Daniel come to judgment!* I have seen girls of 16 suffering from venereal disease, but there was no treatment for them. Of course, now the British have opened some civil hospitals; but their condition was so bad that it will take many years of medical missionary work before the ravages of this creeping disease could be checked. *This is what I saw of the civilization of the dynasty of Caesar in a territory which was being ruled for the last 40 years.*"

The italics are mine. It is very probable that such cruelties had been perpetrated on the population by the Italians, but it seems to me that either a Jemadar who could write English so well was rotting in the Middle East or that someone had faked the letter and the Propaganda Department was gullible enough to swallow it as a genuine one.

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As a result of the Government of India's warning to the people to see that no information of any value should go into enemy hands, a circular was issued by the Educational Department of an Indian State to the various

Primary and Secondary schools to see that all maps of India which were used in the History and Geography classes were locked up every day in a secure place. The headmasters issued instructions to the teachers accordingly and for days the utmost care was taken of such maps, until one curious individual, inspecting the maps closely, discovered that they were made in Japan.

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One other War story—of the Dewan of one of the better known Indian States, which shall be nameless. In the early years of the War, the Government of India, probably shaken up by Whitehall, began to make enquiries through the Residencies in India whether there was any fifth-column activity in the capital of that particular State. The Resident in turn addressed his query to the Dewan, who passed it on to the States Military Department. The Department informed the Dewan that to the best of its knowledge, there was no such activity. Aware of the policy of the Ruler, which was to keep the paramount power pleased at any cost, the Dewan apologetically replied to the Resident:— “I regret to say that there is no such activity at the present moment, but I can assure you that steps will soon be taken by His Highness to start the said activity.”

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There must be many people who will remember the Sir Hari Singh Gour incident which had its echo in the House of Commons. For those who may not be aware of its occurrence, it is necessary to say that Sir Hari Singh Gour was refused admission to a London Hotel because of the colour of his skin. Mr. Morrison, Home Secretary for Britain, regretted there was nothing he could do about it. This had been the sad story of many an Indian who had visited that great metropolis—often referred to as the heart of the Empire—an Empire to which you are sup-

posed to belong; an Empire for which you are asked to fight; an Empire which, it was alleged, embodied the idea of brotherhood and of the equality of men. Such incidents are not few and far between. They face the Indians in many places in the Empire. In a classic outburst, Sir Rama Rau, then our representative in South Africa, said on the eve of his departure from that prejudice-ridden country: "Today when the Indian soldier is fighting side by side with you in Abyssinia, Libya, he who has conquered Eritrea for you; today when those from India are helping South Africa to rout Nazism from the North, playing their part in saving civilization from annihilation, you deny them the elementary right of attending your Universities."

The answer and explanation came from an Englishman in Colombo in a letter to the Editor of the *Ceylon Daily News*. Mr. C. Dyson Armstrong, whoever he is, said in reply to my article which the *Ceylon Daily News* reproduced:

"Sir,—Having read the article by D. F. Karaka on Mr. Morrison Regrets, in this morning's paper, may I be permitted to state *the other side*.

There is not that discrimination in England or Europe which the article implies.

The fact that Indians are sometimes refused admission to hotels, flats, etc., is very often due to their own fault.

I have met several hotel managers and owners of flats who would rather keep their rooms empty, than let again, because the last Indian family had left their rooms in a disgraceful condition.

I recall one lady who showed my wife and myself a charming flat which an Indian family had vacated. Spicy and greasy food had obviously been cooked or heated at the electric fire-place. Grease marks were everywhere on good carpets and chair-backs, glass and other marks on every polished article with a few burn marks. It would cost the owner of the flat pounds to clean up before she could let again, and she said 'Never again'.

At hotels the same thing often happens, little things which often annoy other residents; the burning of joss sticks, highly perfumed hair-oils, the Eastern habit of clearing one's throat in the morning and the state of the apartments due to, I will not say dirt but use the word 'carelessness'. Is there not a preference for European tenants, by owners of Colombo house property, the obvious reason being that the owner feels his property will be well looked after and improved?—Yours etc."

While C. Dyson Armstrong was worrying about grease spots on chair-backs in Colombo, Indian soldiers of the Fourth Indian Division were also leaving blood spots on the sands of the Western Desert. No one seemed to object to that. The Bombay Gymkhana still closes its doors to Indians. It was about this time that an out of the ordinary Englishman, General Sir Noel Beresford-Peirse once commander of the Fourth Indian Division, was the G.O.C. Southern Army. Feeling, and rightly feeling, that in a world war with Indian officers and men fighting under him, he could not allow this sort of nonsense to continue in the clubs and gymkhana in India, Beresford-Peirse put the Madras Club out of bounds to all personnel of the Southern Army because of its refusal to comply with his suggestion that the club should be thrown open to Indians.

What a story it makes—the Fourth Indian Division on the one hand and the little white gymkhana on the other!

A country steeped in non-violence....  
Torn by communal strife, as they say in the House of Commons.....

A country in bondage, its detenues and guarded palaces.....  
From such a country as this unfit for self government, unfit to hold land in South Africa, unfit to share in the great decisions that are being taken everywhere for the future of humanity, there comes a single Indian Division, which is reputed to have been the terror of the enemy.

An Indian Army Observer, very probably an Englishman, (there were hardly any Indian War Correspondents then) sent out in April 1943 a story which was released from New Delhi:

"A comic story of a German officer's anxiety to know the identity of his captors shows how highly respected is the Fourth Indian Division. When about fifty of the enemy surrendered, a German officer came forward to a carrier commander and asked in good English:—"Are you American?", the carrier commander shook his head without answering.

"Are you French?" asked the German. There was no negative reply but the German persisted:—"Are you the First Army?" he asked. The British officer spoke at last. "No" he said, "we are part of the Fourth Indian Division."

"When the carrier commander said this, the German officer opened his eyes wide and threw up his hands with a suddenness which spoke volumes."

The Germans have spoken volumes of the Fourth Indian Division. The Italians have also spoken. Only some of our comrades-in-arms were once a little hesitant to speak. The irony is too cruel. An Indian Division as the torch-bearer of world freedom! An Indian Division as the spearhead of a force called "Democracy!" An Indian Division to liquidate another people's empire! Brown bombers sweeping over Tunisia, while Mr. Amery was answering questions in the House of Commons and Mr. Churchill was probably convincing Mr. Roosevelt that the administration in India was based on the most democratic principles, except, of course, such minor details as Defence of India Rules which were only a war-time necessity.

Coloured men carrying the flag in the cause of a freedom which has been denied to them; coloured men dying on the desert sands to give the finishing touch to a battle which may be the turning point of this war; coloured men....

"Bearer, ek chota whisky!"

# THE SAD PLIGHT OF HARIJANS

133

Coloured men thrown out of Bayswater hotels by silly little landladies and out of South Africa by silly old Field Marshals.....

"Bearer!"

Coloured men who still cannot get a drink of water in the European gymkhana.....

"Bearer! Bearer!"

Illiterate masses of coloured men stupidly talking about 'Swaraj' as their birthright.....

"Bearer! Where the hell is that.....Bearer?"

Maybe he was in Tunis fighting that bloody war.

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While writing columns on grease spots, the colour question and all such important racial issues, I received a letter from an advocate of the Bombay High Court. His name was N. C. Narsimha Acharya. He said:

"It is with regret that I have to point out that the dead body of a Harijan by name of Pochanna Karila who died at Colaba was refused permission for cremation at the Queen's Road cremation ground. Harijan friends carried the body to the Queen's Road cremation ground. But the authorities, coming to know that they could not allow it to be cremated there. Hence the body was carried about six or seven miles to Worli for cremation. The Municipal Commissioner informed us that the 'cremation ground in requesting for an enquiry into the matter. The Municipal question is a private one and is reported to be intended for the use of certain castes of Hindus, and that, hence the Municipal Commissioner regretted, it was not possible for the municipality to compel the Managing Committee to allow cremation of dead bodies of Harijans in this cemetery.' I take it that Mr. Bhat, the Municipal Commissioner, has done what he could in this matter.

For years now, we have been agitating for the Harijans. How is it that in this premier cosmopolitan city this amenity is denied to the Harijan brother? Does the Hindu Burning and Burial Grounds Committee seriously think that by their act they are helping the cause of Hindu Dharma? Have they not heard that even in the 11th Century A.D. the orthodox Vaishnava reformers considered it the highest act of Dharma to cremate the dead bodies of the Harijans which were otherwise neglected as unworthy of being touched by the highest classes?"

After reading which, how could I complain about Mr. C. Dyson Armstrong?

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In January 1941, a shocking story came from the village of Barripur, eighteen miles from Calcutta. A sixty year old Hindu woman suffering from malignant malaria became unconscious, and her neighbours, believing her to be dead, removed her to the Burning Ghat for cremation. "When the body was placed on the funeral pyre", said the Associated Press message, "to the excitement of everyone around, she suddenly got up. The mourners, convinced that the body was possessed of an evil spirit, ran away, and some of them later returned to deal *lathi* blows causing injuries to her head." She was then removed to the Medical College Hospital, Calcutta, and several members of the funeral party were reported to have been arrested. What a horrid and shocking thing that there should be people, so ignorant and superstitious in India, who would deal *lathi* blows to a sixty-year old woman, who was lying on a funeral pyre. It is one of the most gruesome stories that have come our way in recent times.

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In December 1940, a dramatic gesture was made by Mrs. Satyawati, when she discarded the veil for the first time in her life, presiding over the first Anti-Purdah

## THE WOMEN OF PADMINI'S LAND

135

Conference of Rajputana, held in Indergarh. Mrs. Satyawati said that the women of Padmini's land were resolved not to labour any longer under such an intolerable yoke. She added that a society which framed a double standard of morality—one for the men and another for women—stood self-condemned. This was undoubtedly an interesting development in our social life. It was reported that five thousand women attended the Conference and that the moral fervour of the speeches made so terrific an appeal to the delegates that when they returned from it they had discarded the veil!

Time marches on. If there were more women in India of the type of Mrs. Satyawati and the delegates, and if, as I trust the fathers or the husbands of the delegates did not subsequently compel a reversion to the purdah, a lot of darkness would be lifted from this land.

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The sympathetic response which the present Viceroy, Lord Wavell, when Commander-in-Chief of India, gave to an appeal made to him with regard to the application of Poppy Day Fund collections, deserves to be remembered with gratitude, especially for the reason that for many years the British and Anglo-Indian personnel stood mainly to benefit from them.

In October 1941, I was forwarded anonymously a copy of the Poppy Day Appeal signed by the President of the Poppy Day Appeal Committee at Bombay. Among other things it was stated, by way of explanation, that "the appeal is for British personnel only. Indian Personnel are well looked after by other organizations. You are asked to give generously....." (The Italics are mine). That such a discrimination could exist for a number of years is an eloquent testimony of what could happen in this India. In the *Bombay Chronicle*, on Armistice Day (1941), I addressed an open letter to the Commander-in-Chief, from which I give some extracts:—

“Sir,

The date of this letter is important. It is November 11 — Poppy Day — on which you have made your appeal on behalf of “those who fought in the Great War of 1914-18 and those who are fighting in the present war and will in due course become Ex-Servicemen.” It is, as it has been for many years now, a day of universal mourning in memory of the glorious dead, without distinction of race, creed or colour.

“All these many years, we have responded generously and unstintingly to this appeal, believing that the poppy stood as the emblem of that universal suffering which had resulted from the last war... Although a number of individuals found out earlier that the Poppy Day appeal was only for the British personnel, it is only this year...that it is driven home to many of us that the Indian personnel is excluded from this fund. Moreover while you say that contributions can be earmarked for the Indian War Benevolent Fund, you do not explain how the man-in-the-street whose contribution can only be the purchase of a single poppy can contribute in any way to the cause of the Indian ex-Servicemen... The result is that the great bulk of moneys collected in India from Indian people never goes to our own men . . . .

“You are no ordinary person. Your name has made history in the Second Great War. Your achievement in the Middle East will rank high when historians will pass judgment on the major events of this war... I emphasize this to show how difficult it is for anyone to resist an appeal that comes from you and therefore how much responsibility rests on you to see that your appeal does not discriminate between the men who fought under your command . . . .

“Not so long ago you saw these countrymen of ours fight. At Sidi Barrani, at Tobruk, at Kasala,

## WHITE POPPIES WORK WONDERS

137

at Addis Abbaba, at Keren, at Massawa, at Deesa, at Amba Alagi and in Syria you saw the gallantry and the valour of these men. Some of these men are dead, their families dependent on such support as only charity can give. Others are disabled and lying wounded in hospitals in India. So many of these may never live to enjoy life in the fullest sense of that word.... Can you then today make a special appeal for British Ex-Servicemen alone ?...

"Therefore, sir, today in the Streets of Bombay white poppies will be sold and the proceeds of these will be added to the Rs.1,000, which Sir Victor Sassoon bid on the Night of the Sixth November, and sent to you in a few days with a request that the proceeds of the sale of these white poppies should be divided **EQUALLY** between the British and the Indian personnel....

"There are only a few wreaths and 600 white poppies which we have been able to secure in a short space of time. Their quantity is not important, what is important is the depth of feeling in those who will wear them. As Sarojini Naidu says:—

"When the terror and tumult of hate shall cease  
And life be refashioned on anvils of peace,  
And your love shall offer memorial thanks  
To the comrades who fought in

your dauntless ranks  
And you honour the deeds of the deathless ones,  
Remember the blood of my martyred Sons!"

Yes, sir, this is all we ask you to remember.

The amount collected was sent to the Commander-in-Chief, and his letter in acknowledgment bore the hallmark of a great gentleman. It was a personal letter which he did not wish to be released, but he promised then that the next appeal on Poppy Day would not be as it had

been in 1941 and the years that went before. He kept his word.

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Dr. Schacht came to India in April 1939, ostensibly on a holiday, but really on an ulterior mission. A man of his character and antecedents should never have been allowed by the British Government to step on the shores of India. But the Prime Minister of the day, Sir Neville Chamberlain, had committed himself and his Government to a policy of appeasement. There was no indication that the Government of India ever protested against the visit. To unmask its real nature, and to open the eyes of the Indian Government and of the Indians to the danger of having anything to do with this notorious representative of the Nazi regime, I addressed a letter to him in the columns of the *Bombay Chronicle* to show that Indians were not so easily beguiled into believing the pledges of Nazi gangsters as were some of the British statesmen of the time. I reproduce below some extracts from that letter of 13th April 1939:—

“Herr Doctor,

I am one of the journalists who have not come to interview you.....I am...particular about the people I interview. But I do feel that in fairness to you, before your holiday begins, you should know exactly how we feel about your presence here in our midst and the reasons for our feelings. So that when you go back to Germany you can at least tell your Fuehrer that this country may not have been very cordial, but it certainly was honest to you.

“.....It is one of the inherent traits in our Indian character never to attack a man who is a guest in our house, even though he may be uninvited. There is one exception to that and it is in self-defence. When we find that our own country is endangered by the presence in our midst of a

stranger, we have to say of necessity what we feel. You are one such person. Your presence here in India is on a most dangerous mission—dangerous as far as our country is concerned, and you might as well know that everything possible will be done to hinder your movements at every stage and to put you continually in the limelight wherever you go, so that your very presence in India will be a cause of embarrassment to those who may be foolish enough to harbour you. I do not remember any other occasion when we have been so ungallant. But likewise there has never been the necessity. When we "persecute", I do not mean the sort of persecution you understand. We have no concentration camps here..... Nor perhaps have we a Government at the centre who will have the commonsense and the foresight to hinder you. If we had, you would never have landed on the shores of this country... not even as a tourist. But there is a legion of journalists all over this country who will persecute you, till every paper every day will tell you exactly what India thinks and feels..... If Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai's son meets you at the Mole Station, we cannot possibly object. But if Mr. Ambalal Sarabhai offers you the cotton from his mills, it may be possible to make sure that there is no cotton in his mills to give... So that if public opinion is really strong in this country, you can be assured that you will go as empty-handed as you have come. I think there is enough sense of national pride in men of the high calibre and integrity of Seth Ambalal Sarabhai to respect the wishes of their countrymen, even though it may be at considerable sacrifice to themselves..... And you may not know this, Herr Doctor.

"You may rightly ask why there is this great antipathy towards you. Are we not prepared to accept a gentleman's word that you are merely on a tour.....? ..... From the time that Mr. Lloyd

George fumed over your reference to "the scrap paper" till today, you have done everything possible to show that to you—the German people blue-blooded, Aryan and all that—the Gentleman's word does not mean very much. You are here, say, for the purposes of your country's gain . . . .

"I think a time has come when the Government of India should take a little cognizance of the wishes of the people.....so that you, learned Doctor might gracefully be asked to abandon the town, say, on reasons of health,—because the heat of this country is not suitable to pure Nazi blood. And it is necessary, this is the fit and proper time for the Sheriff of Bombay to convene a public meeting to allow the people of this city to express their opinion on this very vital issue.

"And that is not all that we have against you. You are to us the symbol of Nazism, and Nazism stands for bloodshed and murder. These are not words used in the heat of the moment. They are chosen with due care and consideration..... It is not only the bloodshed and murder that Nazis have already committed, but it is also that which their policy is leading the world to..... I think now of the countless Jewish families which Nazis have broken up, of the thousands of innocent people who have perished..... I think now, too, of the hundreds of young Jewish girls whom the Nazis have made to walk in the streets of the world and who have gradually been forced to become of the street.....

"Those in India who are willing to deal with you must remember that. They must realize that every rupee spent in buying German goods goes to help the Nazi Government in its mad rush for power. They must remember that everything that comes out of Germany likewise carries with it that stain of blood.....

".....

"We are a comparatively young people in the march of modern civilization. We have only just finished the first stage of our long struggle against British Imperialism. We have been fighting with our backs to the wall till the marrow has been drained from our bones. So that it is not because we are pro-British that we hate Nazism, but because we are today anti-German, anti-Nazi, anti anything that you stand for, Herr Doctor...Nazism today has no respect for men or God. It is admittedly anti-God, anti-morality, anti everything that is pure and uplifting. British Imperialism has its faults but Nazism is the last thing in Hell to take its place.

"That is frankly our feeling towards your presence here. It is usually customary to retire gracefully from the scene, when such is the feeling of a country which you have unfortunately picked for your "holiday".....There is Japan just round the corner and it is an amusing spot too. They tell me the Japanese are just dying to see you. Strange, isn't it, that you never knew about it all this time?"



## STORIES RETOLD

1. IVANHOE (Sir Walter Scott). *By P. C. Wren.*  
*Revised (1951) by B. M. Chester*
3. GULLIVER'S TRAVELS (Jonathan Swift). *By P. C. Wren*
5. STORIES FROM KING ARTHUR (Lord Tennyson,  
*By H. Malim*
6. A TALE OF TWO CITIES (Charles Dickens). *By E. Smith*
8. THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII (Lord Lytton). *By E. Tydeman*
9. THE PRISONER OF ZENDA (Anthony Hope). *By E. V. Rieu*
10. KENILWORTH (Sir Walter Scott.) *By R. McG. Spence.*  
*Revised (1952) by B. M. Chester*
13. QUENTIN DURWARD (Sir Walter Scott). *By C. W. Stewart*
17. DON QUIXOTE (Miguel de Cervantes). *By N. L. Carrington*
18. THE TALISMAN (Sir Walter Scott). *By E. Smith*
19. RUPERT OF HENTZAU (Anthony Hope). *By E. V. Rieu*
20. BRIGADIER GERARD (Conan Doyle). *By C. W. Stewart*
21. STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE (H. G. Wyatt).
22. TREASURE ISLAND (R. L. Stevenson). *By G. F. J. Cumberlege*
23. TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS (Thomas Hughes)  
*By H. D. B. Harford*
24. MORE STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE (H. G. Wyatt).
25. SCARAMOUCHE (Rafael Sabatini). *By R. C. Goffin*
26. THE GLADIATORS (G. J. Whyte-Melville). *By Sir George Dunbar*
27. PHROSO (Anthony Hope). *By C. W. Stewart*
29. BEAU GESTE (P. C. Wren). *By R. C. Goffin*
30. THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES (Conan Doyle)  
*By B. M. Chester*
31. THE TALE OF THE 'BOUNTY' (Sir John Barrow)  
*By H. G. Wyatt*
33. THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL (Baroness Orczy). *By R. C.*
36. ROBINSON CRUSOE (Daniel Defoe). *By A. S. Hornby*
37. DAVID COPPERFIELD (Charles Dickens). *By Anthony Toye*
38. OLIVER TWIST (Charles Dickens). *By Anthony Toye*